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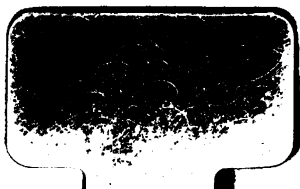
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LIFE AND ITS REALITIES.

BY

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"HOME SKETCHES," "RAMBLES IN THE SOUTH OF IRELAND,"

"THE PYRENEES AND SPAIN," &c.

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LIFE AND ITS REALITIES.

CHAPTER I.

AWAKENED RECOLLECTIONS.

LUCY was very anxious to know how her sister had slept, and was much relieved to find that nothing had occurred to disturb her rest.

“But did you actually sleep all night with that awful closet door open?” she inquired, as she entered the room with her sister after breakfast.

“I cannot understand why it should be open,” said Harriet, “for it was certainly closed

when we went to bed. I suppose the wind blew it open ; you know it was a very stormy night.” .

“ But it is delightfully fine to-day,” she continued, as she saw her sister was gazing with a look of fear and horror towards the spot. “ It will be a charming morning for a drive. Now pray do not look at those foolish spots ; I know they are only stains in the wood. They were always there. Come, dear Lucy, for I want you to drive me to Hartfield. I long to have a roam with you over the dear old downs. Come, for you are quite pale with fear, and it will do you good and little Mary too. She looks ill this morning, and I am sure the breezes of our native downs would revive her.”

“ Well, we will go if you wish,” said Lucy ; but she dreaded it more than she liked to confess even to herself.

“ But it is very foolish,” she thought, “ and

surely I ought not to give way to such feelings."

Later in the day, they drove to Hartfield, the children rode on ponies and donkeys, and then the whole party walked up to Winbarrow Down.

Lucy was so absorbed in the recollections excited by that loved scene, that she took scarcely any notice of the children, and did not perceive that Charlotte's high spirits were rather oppressive to her cousin.

"You see now how right I always was," said Harriet, as they walked over the highest point, and came in sight of Rollston Court. "You are now convinced what a much better husband Mr. Mandeville is, than poor Augustus would have been."

"I certainly am," said Lucy; but this was a trying moment to be reminded of it, for it was impossible to behold that prospect, and not feel something of the old rapturous sensation

which it used to awaken. And then the crowd of memories—the form of Augustus as he used to bound up the hill, the sound of his voice, his tone, and words, all had such a vivid and present distinctness, that she could scarcely believe everything was so completely changed. The past seemed all real, the present only a dream.

She could scarcely repress her tears ; but she repeated again, with a faint smile,

“ Yes, dear Harriet, I certainly have every reason to be thankful.”

Then, feeling that her sister could not enter into her feelings, she ran up to her husband, and said, as she took his arm,

“ I told you it would make me sad, and you were quite right not to urge me to come ; but I must learn to get over it now.”

“ What makes Aunt Lucy sad ?” enquired Mary of her cousin Hubert in a low whisper.

“ I think she was crying, only she did not

want Mamma to see it, so do not say anything about it; but I saw a tear run down her cheek."

"What is that you are whispering about Mamma crying?" inquired Charlotte, as her quick ear caught the last words, and she dashed up impetuously and put her hands on Mary's shoulders. "Mamma never cries, because she is always good: I never saw her cry except when old nurse Nanny died; and look! she is laughing now with Papa."

"Come, let's have a good run down this steep hill," she continued, as she seized both their hands and dragged them onwards down the slippery grass.

Hubert blushed and was half pleased and half annoyed, for he saw that his cousin had not wished that Charlotte should have heard her question, and it flattered his pride that she should have confided in him who was so much more backward and less clever than his

sister, and yet he was sorry that Mary had been pained by Charlotte's overhearing it.

So both the cousins felt ill at ease, and ran down all the more impetuously, in order to hide their confusion from the tall, sensible Charlotte.

"I am afraid that great rough girl is tiring poor little Mary," said Lucy as she joined her sister again. "Charlotte is sadly uncouth, and often oppresses poor Hubert; but it is so difficult to know what to do, for I am afraid of checking her high spirits, and Hubert is a very odd child. I sometimes fear he is like what I was; only he is so reserved, that it is very hard to make him out. He seems to have taken a great fancy to Mary. But see! they have thrown the poor child down."

And Lucy dashed down the steep declivity, and reached the children just as Mary was being raised from the ground.

"I hope you are not much hurt, my darling

child !” she said as she took Mary in her arms and looked into her pale face with an expression of anxiety.

“Oh, no, dear, dear Aunt,” said Mary, though she was suffering severely from pain ; but the sight of her aunt’s face, and feeling herself in her arms, made her regardless of everything else.

“But you are very much bruised, darling child.—And see ! she cannot move this arm,” continued Lucy, as Harriet and the others came up.

They then discovered that the arm was broken, and the next moment the child fainted.

“No, do not take her away,” said Lucy ; “I will carry her. What a courageous girl she is, dear little thing !, she said she was not hurt.”

“We had better take her to the doctor, at Rollston ; that will be nearer now that we are

so far down the hill," said Mr. Mandeville ;
"but indeed you must not carry her."

"Stay, I will keep her till she recovers from this faint. Run down to the brook for some water, Charlotte," she said with a severe look towards the child ; "and I hope this misfortune will be a lesson to you not to be so rough again : it was entirely your fault."

Charlotte was very much frightened, and expressed great contrition.

"There, go and help Papa to bring it—you see he is getting some in his hat ;—and don't cry, Hubert. You could not help it : I saw Charlotte drag you both down."

"But why does she not open her eyes, Mamma? is she asleep?" inquired the boy, as he gazed with a look of awe on Mary's face.

"She has fainted, poor dear child !" said his mother, as she kissed Mary's cold cheeks, and nestled her head close to her bosom.

"But she is smiling now, and opening her eyes, darling Mary : I am so glad."

"Oh ! that's you dear aunt ; I am quite well, and oh ! so happy."

"She is delirious, I fear," said Lucy, as she turned, with a look of terror, towards Harriet.

"Are you in great pain, my poor dear?" inquired her mother.

"My arm hurts ; but I am happy, for dear Aunt Lucy's eyes gaze on me so kindly, it seems as if I must be in heaven."

"She was always wonderfully fond of your picture, Lucy, and her greatest reward often was for me to tell her something about her aunt."

"How very strange !" said Lucy, kissing Mary again and again, as she saw the soothing effect her caresses had.

Mr. Mandeville ran towards the doctor's house, and fortunately finding him at home, returned with him without loss of time.

He discovered a compound fracture of the arm, and was surprised at the patience with which the child bore the great suffering it created.

They carried her into his house, where he set the broken limb. Mrs. Mandeville would have her on her lap during the painful operation, gazing on her face and holding her hand all the time.

She had the greatest horror of witnessing pain, therefore it was no slight effort to maintain her composure.

In the meantime, Mr. Mandeville had succeeded in getting an easy conveyance, and the ladies and children having been placed in it, they took the shortest way to Ilminster, through the grounds of Rollston : they drove close to the house, which had never been inhabited since Sir Lionel had left it.

The estate was in chancery, and was evidently much neglected, the grass growing

on the gravel walks and stone steps ; and
the whole place had a desolate and melan-
choly air, which depressed Lucy extremely.

“ The pear and quince lay squandered on the grass,
The mould was purple with unheeded showers
Of bloomy plums—a wilderness it was,
Of fruits, and weeds, and flowers !

The marigold amidst the nettles blew,
The gourd embraced the rose-bush in its ramble ;
The thistle and the stock together grew,
The holyhock and bramble.

The very yew formality had train'd
To such a rigid pyramidal stature,
For want of trimming had almost regain'd
The raggedness of nature.

The fountain was a-dry—neglect and time
Had marr'd the work of artisan and mason,
And efts and croaking frogs, begot of slime,
Sprawl'd in the ruin'd bason.

The statue, fallen from its marble base,
Amidst the refuse leaves and herbage rotten,
Lay like the idol of some bygone race,
Its name and rites forgotten.

On ev'ry side the aspect was the same,
All ruined desolate, forlorn, and savage ;
No hand or foot within the precinct came,
To rectify or ravage."*

Lucy could not help looking up at the house, although she had often wished she might never see it again; and the painful recollections it excited made the tears start to her eyes.

It was impossible not to regret most bitterly that Augustus had not possessed sufficient strength of mind to keep that interesting old family residence when he had once succeeded in saving it.

Then she felt very angry with herself for entertaining such feelings; and yet there was something in the desolation of the place which excited her pity for Augustus, and she began to fear that in order to cure her former love she had nourished too great a feeling of dislike.

* Hood.

She had strenuously taught herself to think more and more that he was very inferior to her husband in every respect ; and now she became suddenly aware that she had been unjust.

There was a reaction in her mind as Lucy drove along, and the impulse was increased by what her sister said to comfort her.

For Harriet, more than ever convinced that she had done right in making up the match, expatiated on the usefulness of her sister's life.

"Now you see how right I was when I told you how much more good you could do if you married, than if you remained moping with me. I am so glad I persuaded you to do what has turned out much better even than I expected."

All this aroused, still more than before, the conviction in Lucy's mind that she had been influenced contrary to her own judgment, that she had undertaken responsibilities which

perhaps were greater than she was even yet aware of.

She began to see that her father would have said she had no right to incur such responsibilities, and she trembled to think that she might never succeed in doing justice to her children.

Lucy saw how like her daughter Charlotte was to Mr. Mandeville in feature, and in some other points also ; and she feared that as the father had not always been the chosen of her heart, she should be unable ever rightly to influence her little daughter, or obtain the key to her disposition.

So she looked with a new feeling of depression on Charlotte's somewhat hard countenance, and asked herself despondingly—

“ How shall I be able to educate her properly, or even control the wild vagaries of Hubert's temper ? ”

She saw with pain too, that contact with

her little new cousin seemed to have brought out unamiable traits in Charlotte, which the anxious mother had not before observed, and which therefore gave birth to increased self-reproach in Lucy's mind.

Harriet did not see the mischief she was doing, for she had never fully comprehended her sister's peculiar character, and she was now much less able than formerly to do so.

Her life had been extremely common-place since her marriage. She had met with no great trials to call forth her feelings or develop qualities which perhaps, under more favourable circumstances, might have shown themselves. Therefore she was much perplexed to see a look of dread and unhappiness gradually gathering on Lucy's beautiful face as they drove home, while she continued to expatiate on the advantages of her position.

CHAPTER II.

COURAGE.

FOR some time after this accident, Lucy made Mary sleep in her room. The child rapidly recovered, and regained even more than her former share of good health. Then her mother insisted that she should return to sleep with her.

Mary was sorry for the change, but now she felt more courageous: besides, she dreaded that if she mentioned her fears to Lucy, her aunt might be made unhappy, and she had learnt to watch the changes on her expressive countenance, and

often saw a look which she feared denoted some secret regrets.

"I will not add to my aunt's uneasiness about this room," thought Mary, as she prepared, after saying her prayers, to lie down in the crib where she had suffered such terror the only night she slept there.

And she firmly resolved to try not to think of anything but the beautiful views she had seen, in that pretty country; of the sheep browsing on the fragrant down, of the silvery trout darting through the clear stream near the old Rectory; the pretty churchyard where she had been taken to see the tombs of her mother's parents, and where the slanting sunbeams shone through the dark yew trees, and gleamed like gold on the time-stained monuments.

The thought of that old greystone house—Rollston Court: where mamma *would* have a picnic one day, though Aunt Lucy did not much

like the idea of it; where they had all sat on the terrace steps and watched the setting sun, and afterwards she had followed her cousins into the house, and they wandered about the long passages and large dark staircase.

Then Mary fell asleep, and began to dream of what she had been thinking of at Rollston Court; but the staircase looked more like the one she had come up that evening. And then she certainly was in the haunted room, and she felt extremely frightened, for there was the same low, wailing sound of a child crying.

It came from that closet, and she again saw the door open.

“Howbeit, the door was pushed, or so I dream’d,
Which slowly, slowly gap’d; the hinges creaking
With such a rusty eloquence, it seem’d
That Time himself was speaking.”

She tried not to look—she resolved to hide her head under the bed-clothes; but her hands seemed tied; she could not turn away, or even

shut her eyes. She saw the door open wider, and a tall figure approach.

Oh, horror! it was the same dark man her aunt had described, and he certainly had a child in his arms, with its throat cut.

He slowly approached—came quite near; his bloodshot eyes were fixed on her with a ghastly stare, and drops of blood fell on the bed-clothes, while Mary could not move or even scream.

Then the figure turned slowly away, and walked towards a door on the other side of the room, which seemed to open; and she saw a bright red glow beyond, like fire, but more livid and dreadful; and she thought the man went gradually sinking down into it, and there were black figures, with enormous mouths grinning with delight.

The room was filled with them, and Mary felt she could not breathe, and those dreadful eyes winked at her.

Then suddenly all was dark.

Mary was certainly awake now; but she was sure she had not been asleep, and that the dreadful man and bleeding child had really gone down in the glaring furnace she had seen through that door.

Yet she remembered that there was no door where she had seen it: no door, certainly; yet she had a dim recollection that one day she remarked some hinges, when she had been playing "hide and seek" with her cousins.

And she tried to think this dreadful sight had been a delusion. For the room was quiet and dark now, and she remembered more vividly the day when she remarked those hinges, and had felt them with her fingers, and had imagined, with a sort of shuddering feeling, that perhaps that was some secret door, and led into some awful dark place where people were buried, for she had always

fancied there was a smell in this room that reminded her of the dark transept at Rufyn Church, where the tombstones (with those large flat figures on them, from which the brass had been taken) were always green and damp ; and she used to shudder as she passed by, with a sort of strange dread, that made her long to get out of the church into the sunshine, and hurry away from the churchyard as fast as possible.

She smelt the mouldy, damp smell now, as she lay trembling in her little bed ; and a cold wind seemed to be blowing from the direction of the dark closet. But she felt it was very foolish to think of such things.

She resolutely shut her eyes, and determined to see nothing more ; and would go to sleep, and pray to God that she might not have another awful dream.

She lay quite still, and kept to her resolution, but soon afterwards ; when the Cathe-

dral clock struck twelve, she could not help looking up.

A faint moonlight now shone through the casement, and Mary found it impossible not to look in the direction of the mysterious closet.

She had seen her mother lock the door of it when she came to bed that evening, and Mary had felt so glad when she heard the lock turn, and saw her mother try it afterwards, to ascertain that it was firmly secured.

The Cathedral chimes ceased, and then she again heard the wailing voice: it sounded very low and faint, but certainly came from the other side of the door, on which her eyes were fixed with increasing dread.

Then a sound like a scream of pain was heard, and the door burst open! It opened quite wide, and that cold, damp air, with the dreadful smell, blew strongly against Mary's face.

A dark figure then glided across the room, exactly as she had observed the apparition, in her dream.

It was a man with a large dark beard, and she could see the window through him, and the blue moonlight. He moved towards that part of the wall where she had seen the hinges of a door; but Mary was so frightened lest she should behold more horrors, that she uttered a loud cry, and called wildly to her father and mother for help.

“Oh! mamma, do wake; oh! save me; oh! papa, come quick!”

She uttered a piercing shriek, and then fainted.

Mr. Lennox and his wife started up. They found the child quite insensible; but when they sprinkled her face with water, she opened her eyes.

“Oh! take me from this room,” she exclaimed, as soon as she could speak: “I can’t bear it; indeed I can’t,” she cried hysterically.

"That dreadful man ! see, he really did open the door : look, mamma !"

They both saw that the closet door was open, though perfectly closed when they retired to rest.

"It is certainly very strange," said Mr. Lennox ; " this must be looked into."

" Oh yes ! do, pray do, Papa, for I saw him go out at that part of the room," said Mary, pointing to the spot. She described what she had observed about the hinges.

Mr. Lennox took the candle and examined the wall, and certainly found the hinges just where she pointed out, and then the mark of a door in the panel. He struck it with his hand, and it sounded hollow, unlike the tone produced by the rest of the wainscot when struck.

But they did not like to disturb any one in the house at that hour by using violence to open it.

Mr. Lennox resolved to investigate the matter closely in the morning, and inform Mr. Man-deville of what had occurred. He thought that

some mischievous person had been playing a trick ; and that perhaps there might be some secret staircase or passage into that room, of which Mr. Mandeville had no knowledge.

He determined to sit up and read while his wife and child tried to sleep.

The latter now felt comparatively safe, seeing her father read, in a chair close to her bed, with two candles burning on the table, and was so completely tired and worn out with all her fears, that she soon sank into a quiet slumber.

Harriet would not tell her sister anything about the night's disturbance ; but Mary was very ill the next morning, and Lucy having her suspicions awakened, took her into her own room ; and when the door was closed, and that she had ascertained no one was listening, she questioned her.

" I don't know whether I ought to tell you, dear aunt, for I heard mamma say she did not wish you to hear of it ; and yet—"

“ You must tell me, my dear,” said Lucy, taking her on her knee, and gazing in her face with a look of such compassion in her soft eyes, that Mary felt intensely happy.

“ Oh ! darling aunt, how kind you are to love me,—I hope you will not mind it, or look so dreadfully frightened as you did that first night when you told mamma about the ghost. It was very naughty of me to go back to listen, and I never thought I could have confessed that I did such a wrong thing. But somehow, I fancy I must tell you all, if I say what I saw last night ; for then you will be able to know, perhaps, whether part of it was a dream or not.”

Mary then began to tell exactly all she had seen and heard.

“ And then, afterwards,” she continued, after a pause, “ when I knew I was quite awake, I saw the same figure standing near my bed, only then I knew it was not a real live person, because I saw the window through it. Yet

the face looked, oh ! so like a dreadful man I saw at Rufyn, who was being taken to jail for murdering his wife—Thomas Turvey. Oh, it always made me so unhappy before to see that man, for he put me in mind of what I read in the book of Job, about Satan ‘going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it,’ and what I fancy Judas looked like when I read that he went and hanged himself; or as Cain too, when he killed his brother.”

And the child shook with horror, as her vivid imagination pictured that look of sin.

Lucy became pale with terror, but she pressed the poor child to her breast, and tried to compose her agitation, while she understood more and more the original mind and precocious feelings of the strange child, and reflected on its striking contrast to her own unthinking Charlotte.

“That shadow was just like Thomas Turvey the last time I saw him, only more dreadful

still, for I thought it must always remain the same because he was dead, and that it was his miserable spirit. But," continued little Mary, " what frightened me more than anything was, that I felt as if his eyes would draw me after him—that he wanted to take me to that glaring red place."

" Oh! dear aunt," she exclaimed, bursting into tears, " don't let me sleep in that room again—I can't bear it."

" You shall not, indeed, darling; but now come and play with Hubert; you like playing with him, I know. And Charlotte shall not torment you," she continued.

She led the still terrified child into the school-room, for she was longing to go herself to the haunted room, that she might ascertain whether Mary's description of the strange and new door was correct.

Lucy found the outer door locked; but she heard her husband and Mr. Lennox's voices

within. Though she knocked loudly, it was some time before they noticed her.

A carpenter was with them, and she observed that they had opened the new door just at the place where the child had seen the hinges, beyond which was discovered a narrow stone staircase, built apparently in the thickness of the wall, so choked up with rubbish and old mortar from the ceiling, that it was not safe to venture down.

Spades having been procured, Mr. Lennox was going to throw down the rubbish; but Mr. Mandeville suggested that it would be better to shovel it up to the little top landing, in order that it might not impede their progress. So they cleared away, and after an hour's work, were able to descend about forty steps.

"Those gloomy stairs, so dark and damp and cold,
With odours as from bones and relics carnal,
Deprived of rite, and consecrated mould,
The chapel vault or charnel.

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The air was thick, and in the upper gloom
The bat, or something in its shape, was winging ;
And on the wall, as chilly as a tomb,
The death's-head moth was clinging."

No daylight could penetrate there, but by the aid of lanterns, they discovered that the steps terminated in a low, crooked passage, which seemed to run under-ground in the direction of the churchyard.

The passage had a sort of Gothic, or early English roof, and evidently must have formed some part of the old monastery which formerly stood there, and of which the neighbouring church had once been the chapel. But they could only proceed about four or five feet, for the place was so completely choked up with rubbish.

Lucy went down with them, and although the air was so bad she could scarcely breathe, she was the first to point out a square stone at the bottom of the stairs, which excited her curiosity, and she made them dig round it.

On its being raised, the skeleton of a child appeared, wrapt in some mouldering linen.

Lucy ran up the stairs in haste, for she could not bear the smell. Her husband and Mr. Lennox subsequently searched the closet at the other end of the room, and after a careful investigation, tore down part of the boards, and disclosed an old casement, which had been boarded over. It looked out on the inner part of the roof, and was partly built up on the outside, and partly hidden by a projecting gable, which was the cause of its not having been ever before noticed.

"It must have been the wind coming through this window that blew open the closet door every night," said Mr. Lennox, who was very glad to account for the mystery of the open door.

"But Harriet locked it last night," said Lucy, with an incredulous smile.

"Yes ; but see, the lock scarcely catches,"

said Mr. Lennox : " look, now the lock is quite turned, and yet I can force it open."

This was certainly the case ; and they all, except Lucy, considered that the sound was satisfactorily accounted for, and she said,

" Well, however that may be, I am determined no one shall ever sleep in this room again."

Mr. Mandeville gravely acquiesced in this decision.

CHAPTER III.

ANXIETY.

For a few days afterwards little Mary enjoyed extreme happiness, for she experienced many decided proofs of her aunt's sympathy and love.

She now slept in Lucy's room, and was awakened in the morning either by the sweet tones of her voice, or the blissful sensations that the most beautiful face she had ever seen was close to hers; and on opening her eyes received one of those loving kisses for which she seemed to have longed all her life, but never expected to receive.

Mary had a sort of vague idea that this intense happiness would not last ; that she was not good enough to be loved by such an angel. She knew she was not half so good as Hubert, yet she seldom saw her aunt regard him with such looks of anxious love.

It would not last, she felt ; but her aunt had been frightened because the terrors of that night had made the child very ill ; and Lucy so fully entered into her fears, that she had been most anxious for her health, and had taken great pains to amuse and interest her.

But now she was better ; and, indeed, Lucy discovered, with a sort of feeling of dismay, that she had grown to love Mary far better than her own children. She had a sudden misgiving that it was not just towards her husband ; and she saw, too, that Charlotte, and even Hubert, were becoming jealous.

Charlotte said, with a look of pettish anger one day, when Lucy's attention had wandered while she was saying her lesson—

“ Ah ! you don't care for me now, mamma ; you only love Mary.”

Thus Lucy felt she was punished for having longed to be able to love some being again with the adoration her own father had inspired, and she saw how necessary it was to pray fervently that God would “ govern her affections.”

After this, she evinced less fondness for Mary, although she felt quite as much ; and the sensitive child, who had been luxuriating in her smiles, and had become insatiable of her aunt's love, was deeply pained.

“ Those only by experience taught can tell
The icy chillness of that hour when first
The heart awakes to learn that it must quell
The burning feelings that would from it burst.”*

The Lennoxes were to leave Ilminster next

* Sandes.

week, and Mary had dreaded the parting from her aunt; but when she experienced the change in her manner, she longed to go.

Lucy was even now more demonstrative of affection towards Charlotte, because she felt aware that she had always loved the child less even than Hubert, and began to attribute the girl's increasing unamiableness to a want of indulgence, or, perhaps, a suspicion that she did not possess her mother's love.

So she ceased to find fault, or to correct her; and then Mary was provoked at what she thought injustice in her aunt.

Though diffident of her own merits, she felt certain that she was much better than Charlotte, and this jealousy called forth more bitter and ill-tempered feelings than she had ever yet evinced.

"She is not such a darling after all," thought Lucy, one evening, when Mary was evidently in a sulky humour. "She is very original

and clever, but certainly less amiable than she was ; and perhaps Charlotte may grow up to be the more attractive of the two."

Lucy often thought to herself now, for she was beginning to lose those habits of unreserve which her dear father had taken such pains to cultivate in her disposition.

Since her sister's arrival, she had had less opportunity of talking unreservedly to her husband, and sometimes thoughts and feelings would spring up unbidden, which she now almost shrank from uttering to him.

For their frequent visits to old scenes which Harriet had foolishly insisted on, had opened again the old wounds in Lucy's too constant heart, and produced an irresistible longing to see Augustus once more ; even to hear of his well being, or to learn whether the wife she supposed he had married really loved him as Lucy herself would have done.

The evening before the Lennoxes were to

go, the sisters remained long talking together in Harriet's room. Lucy felt very sad, for she could not bear the idea of parting with her sister and Mary ; she experienced also a sort of strange dread of being left to the interrupted society of her husband, and wondered whether she should have the courage to tell him all the thoughts and feelings she felt conscious he ought to know.

"It is late, dearest Lucy," said Harriet with tears in her eyes, "and yet I have something more to say, though it is a subject I scarcely like alluding to. Yet I feel you should be made aware of it, because, perhaps, it may be in your power, if great care be taken, to avert a dreadful misfortune."

"What is it?" asked Lucy, turning pale, "do tell me ; you look more sad and anxious than I ever saw you since I had that fever when we were girls."

"I am sad and anxious, and perhaps I

ought to have told you before ; but I could not bear to let anything disturb the great delight it has been to enjoy ourselves together, and Mr. Mandeville would not let me either."

"Mr. Mandeville ! what can be the matter ?" Lucy exclaimed in perplexity.

"It is on his account, alas ! dearest Lucy. It goes to my heart when I see you so happy together, and see that he is so completely the chosen of your heart, and the dearest object of your adoration."

"I do love him," said Lucy, "and I do try to—"

"I know you adore him much more than you ever did Augustus," said Harriet, "and that is why you must now be prepared to hear something very sad ; but first I must ask, have you never had any misgiving as to the state of your husband's health ?"

"His health ?"

"Ah ! I see you thought as I did, that he

was quite strong and well ; but, alas ! this is not the case. You know both his parents died suddenly of heart complaints, and, from something he said one day, I thought he fancied he should do the same. So I inquired yesterday of Dr. Short, who has always, as you know, attended him and his parents. He told me that your husband had, indeed, the same disease of the heart that carried off his father, only it has developed itself much earlier in life, and he fears now that he has not many months to live.—Don't look so very miserable, darling ! God will support you when He sends the trial."

Poor Lucy remained for a moment as if stunned, and then burst into tears.

This was, indeed, an unexpected blow, and she felt all the more miserable, because she was well aware that she had not loved Reuben in the way her sister supposed. She felt as if she were going to lose him now, as a pun-

ishment to her, for not having always given him her whole heart.

The intensity of her misery broke down all the barriers of reserve, and she confessed all.

Harriet was much pained, but still more puzzled, for her matter-of-fact and unsentimental nature could not comprehend Lucy's self-accusation and reproach ; for she saw her sister's devotion to her husband and children, the affection with which she evidently regarded Mr. Mandeville, and her unceasing exertions to make him happy.

And this incapacity on Harriet's part to understand her was an additional trial to Lucy at this bitter moment ; for instead of entering into her feelings, and shewing that, after all, it was more Lucy's misfortune than her fault, and that she had always been to Mr. Mandeville as much or more than he expected, —Harriet shut her eyes to Lucy's confessions, and endeavoured to prove to her that the feel-

ings she had suffered from, did not exist at all.

"I tell you, dear Lucy," she continued, "your very misery shows how much you love him. I am convinced it is all fancy, and that you have nothing to reproach yourself with."

"Dear, dear Reuben, I will go to him at once, and confess all."

"What nonsense! Lucy; that you must not indeed, for it would agitate him fearfully, and Dr. Short says that all agitation is particularly bad. Besides, what possible good could it do to tell him you did not love him so much as Augustus?—a person who may be dead and buried for all you know, and doubtless is, or else more likely still is utterly depraved and wicked, or he would have written long ago to his old friends. You say I don't understand you, and I am certain Reuben would still less. Besides, I know you love him, and I did quite

right to persuade you to marry him; quite right. It is all nonsense."

"Yes, dear Harriet," sobbed Lucy, "I do love him, but not in the manner you suppose."

"Oh! well, you love him quite enough for anybody," replied Harriet, pettishly; but Lucy did not seem to heed her, for her thoughts were absorbed by the sad news she had heard, and she would, at that moment, have given worlds to throw herself at her husband's feet, and confess all the discontent and wayward feelings which an hour before she had dreaded to be obliged to reveal.

She could not, at any rate, feel easy without seeing him at once, and giving vent to the tenderness and affection she really felt. So, drying her tears, she hastily inquired of Harriet whether Mr. Mandeville knew that she was going to tell her.

"Yes, he spoke to me on the subject, and

that is why I saw the doctor, and then Reuben told me that I had better tell you the truth."

Lucy did not even wait to wish her sister good night, but rushed into her husband's dressing-room.

She found him reading the Bible, his usual habit before retiring to rest, and throwing herself into his arms, endeavoured, with as little emotion or agitation as possible, to express her sorrow, and the anxiety she felt for his health.

It was dreadful to feel that she must not pour forth the pent-up torrent of her self-reproach; but Harriet had said it would agitate him too much, and Lucy felt this compulsory reserve was a just retribution for having so lately dreaded to confide in him.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MEETING.

AFTER that evening, all Lucy's feelings were absorbed in anxiety about her husband's health, and in efforts, for his sake, to appear calm and cheerful. For his great fear seemed to be lest she should be unhappy; and she saw that whenever she evinced any sadness, it had the effect of depressing him.

But she watched all his movements with feverish anxiety: whenever he was longer out than usual, she waited at the window with straining eyes and a beating heart, while a cold

shudder would pass over her, and a feeling of dizziness oppress her head, and her tongue clave to the roof of her mouth.

She often consulted Dr. Short about her husband, and regulated everything she did or said exactly as he advised.

The doctor was deeply touched by her anxiety, and endeavoured to impress upon her the importance of attending to her own health. He, moreover, gave some little hope that Mr. Mandeville might, with care, be spared for some time.

One morning Mr. Mandeville had gone out earlier than usual on some particular business, and he seemed in such good spirits, that Lucy sat down to her work in a more cheerful frame of mind than she had long enjoyed.

The children were playing in the garden, and their merry voices were heard through the open window.

It was one of those bright, balmy days in

November, which belong to what the French call *le petit été de St. Martin*, but which the Saint's influence does not often vouchsafe to this chilly country.

Lucy looked at her children, and remarked with extreme pleasure, that Charlotte was becoming less disposed to domineer over her brother, and that Hubert had become less wayward and odd lately.

The children were rolling their hoops on the walks, then paused, and ran hand in hand down the grassy slopes.

Soon Charlotte sat down on the steps — pulled off the mountain-ash berries, and helped Hubert to make wreaths of them. Then they ran after the red leaves that fell from the creepers which grew on the house, and she heard Hubert calling his 'sister's' attention to the beautiful autumnal tint on the trees and shrubs.

And as Lucy sat at her work that fine au-

tumnal morning, listening to the merry voices of her children at play, she felt more hope than she had experienced since Harriet had first told her of Mr. Mandeville's danger.

Her greatest suffering had been caused by knowing that she had not told him of all the wayward and regretful feelings which had been awakened by the frequent visits Harriet had persuaded her to make to the scenes of her happy childhood and youth.

But lately her thoughts had been so entirely absorbed in anxiety for her husband's health, and the dread of losing him had so greatly increased her admiration and affection for him, that she began to think there had been but little to tell.

"I certainly do love him now better than ever I did Augustus ; so after all, perhaps Harriet was right, and that it would have been useless to have troubled Reuben with any doubts on the subject."

This conviction made her feel so happy that she began to sing, while her fingers continued to ply the needle with a sort of graceful, undulating movement that harmonized with the music, and her little foot beat time.

It was an old Scotch air she used to sing when she was a child ; but as she came to the last verse, she suddenly remembered that one evening, when she had been singing it in the old summer-house at the Rectory, Augustus had unexpectedly appeared.

The rapturous expression of admiration she had then seen on his countenance, and the peculiar tone in which he had said, " Oh, how I do love that song !" all came back with provoking vividness to her mind.

" How tiresome it is," she thought, " that sometimes all I do or say puts me in mind of exactly what I don't want to think of."

A slight frown contracted her beautiful forehead, and a heightened colour glowed on her

cheek, and she plied her needle with a sort of pettish quickness, as if to drive away unwelcome thoughts.

Suddenly she heard a sound which made her start : the needle fell from her fingers ; yet she grasped her work tightly, with a sort of nervous tenacity.

She heard, through the open window, her children playing ; but it was not the sound of the hoops which made her tremble. It was a step in the hall : nearer and nearer it came, and then a voice was heard ! And Lucy longed to sink into the earth.

The door opened ; but she could not look up, or even move ; she seemed rooted to the spot, and could only clasp her hands together as if in fervent prayer.

She felt conscious that some one was looking at her, and she knew who it was. She knew that this was a meeting she had often pictured to herself, but she had always

fancied that it could not move her—that she should look upon his face with a proud and indifferent air. She had not time now to remember what she had intended to say, for words reached her ears which made the lately heightened colour forsake her cheeks.

“Oh! Lucy, is it possible you could have believed that infernal report? Could you imagine I should prove so faithless as to marry? Could you—”

Lucy looked up and saw what she knew before—that it was Augustus.

She saw too plainly that he had never ceased to love her. She scarcely heeded the words he uttered. She could at first hardly breathe—his bitter reproaches fell powerless on her ears—his explanation of his brother’s treacherous conduct was scarcely understood.

She only saw and felt that it was her own Augustus, the same unchanged,—that

time and active industry had developed the good qualities which lay dormant before, and which, even her father had hoped, might in time bear fruit.

Although languid and careworn, there was a look of repose and self-reliance on his brow, which had formerly been wanting.

"Yet he is lost to me for ever, and by my own fault," was the agonising feeling which predominated in her mind.

Then, as he went on to describe how he had toiled and suffered in that strange country—how trust in her constancy had been the only hope that impelled him to struggle, as the only guiding-star of his weary path—her attention became painfully rivetted to his words. To think, to know all this, was more than she could bear.

"Oh! do not," she gasped out in beseeching tones, "pray do not, I cannot bear it. You know we all read the account of

your marriage in the newspapers ; the name even of your wife, Maria Smith, was specified."

"Yet when I heard that you had married Mr. Mandeville, nothing would induce me to believe it, even after all these long, long years. When I arrived in London, and was assured it was true, I was indignant at the idea. I would not let it influence me in the least.

"I went straight to the man of business in London, who I knew could ascertain for me whether any part of the old Rollston estate was still to be had. I found a small portion of it—a beautiful farm a mile distant from the Hall—unsold, and I immediately concluded the purchase of it, without even allowing myself to inquire about you, although I knew the man could tell me whether the report was true. As soon as the purchase was concluded, I started direct

for the old farm house, and found it in better repair than I expected, and then for one blissful evening and night I indulged in visions—but I must not think of it now,” he continued, with a look of such hopeless misery, that Lucy seemed almost deprived of reason at the sight.

“This morning I went to your father’s old rectory, intending to enquire your address, and then the sad, sad truth I could no longer doubt; and my first impulse was then to leave England at once, without endeavouring to see you.

“But when I walked along the road under the beech-grove, and remembered the last time I was there, on that fatal morning when your father refused my suit, and I knew you were justly incensed at my weakness and folly, I felt I had no right to resent your desertion. Although your father gave me hopes that if I were successful in con-

quering my evil habits I should find you unchanged,—he was sure you would still care for me; and God knows it was those words he that day uttered, which have carried me through every suffering, and, I trust, enabled me, with God's blessing, to vanquish my sad love of gaming.

“Yet I remembered there was no engagement on your part—that you had a perfect right to marry whom you pleased, for my folly had forfeited all claim to your love. So I felt humbled and remorseful, and after visiting the grave of your parents, and offering up a fervent prayer for your happiness, I could not resist trying to see you once more.

“And now pardon me if I have pained and reproached you. I see you were right to marry, for you never, never could have loved me,” he added, with a sudden bitterness.

"Yet I know it was entirely my own fault ; for if I could have overcome my fatal love for gambling and speculating, if I could then have proved worthy, you perhaps might have consented to be mine. But now it does seem hard," he added wildly, "after so many years of industry, which even your father would have approved, if he could have seen all my struggles, and witnessed the fervent prayers I put up in those awful solitudes ; it is hard to come back and find you lost to me for ever.

"But it was all my fault," he said more quickly ; "it was a foolish dream, and I must but learn to awake at last to a dull and cold reality. You are happy, you are still more beautiful than ever ; no care evidently, no anxious thoughts for an exiled and forsaken friend have clouded your brow, no regrets for the person you once affected to care for,—have dimmed the brightness of

your loveliness : on the contrary, you are probably enjoying perfect happiness, united to the husband of your choice."

Lucy covered her face with her hands, to hide the burning blushes the last words had called forth, which might have betrayed the feelings she would not allow herself to put into words. Yet she felt it was very hard to allow him to suppose that she had never loved him—very hard that he should not know how keenly she had felt his desertion. "But it must not be, I must not speak, and I will now tell Reuben all. I will, I must have no reserve with him now." And Lucy burst into tears, and muttered something about "Mr. Mandeville knows all, he knows—he will tell you—he will."

"I cannot see him," said Augustus. "And I think my best plan will be to return to my exile, as now I could not bear to live here ; every spot is full of the recollection of my

happy dreams. It would be no matter what became of me—my life is utterly useless, were it not for my brother's child;—I must live for poor little Frederic. But why should I talk of myself and my plans to you?" he said, as he moved towards the door. "I will intrude no longer."

Lucy heard him open the door; she might never see him again, and to part thus in anger, was more than she could bear.

"Stay," she exclaimed, while she rose from her chair and put out her hand—"you must not go—you must see Mr. Mandeville; do not turn from me with that dreadful look. Can you not forgive?" and again she put out her hand.

Augustus seized it, and pressed it to his lips for a moment; but the next he tore himself away; and both felt that they must never meet again.

Lucy did not now attempt to detain him.

The thrill of his touch—the burning kiss on her hand, caused such a tumult of contending feelings, that she felt quite faint and giddy. Her eyes were fixed on the door by which he had gone, and she listened to the last sound of his retreating footsteps in the passage.

“What are you looking at, dear mamma?” said Hubert, who had stolen unperceived into the room; “and who was that pale, dark man who kissed your hand? Dear, dear mamma! I did not wish to startle you. Oh, don’t look so unhappy; you are as white as when you came from the—the oak bed-room, and you can hardly stand. I wish papa would come home.”

“So do I indeed,” answered Lucy, for her predominating feeling now was, a longing to tell him all. The barrier of reserve, which seemed to have sprung up since Harriet’s visit, must now be broken down, and Lucy found that the prospect of this inevitable con-

fession gave her a faint gleam of comfort in the midst of overwhelming misery.

She then busied herself resolutely with her children's studies, and would not allow her attention to wander from them. When they were over, she tried to read, for she could not resume that piece of work—that old song—which had been interrupted by the arrival of Augustus. But Mr. Mandeville might come at any moment, so it was impossible to fix her attention on the book. The short day was drawing to a close too, and she could scarcely see; yet she generally liked the twilight, and never lighted the candles till Mr. Mandeville had returned home.

As the moment of his arrival drew near, she trembled and began to feel serious alarm, lest the agitation of hearing what she had to say would be injurious to his health. Yet it would be too dreadful, she thought, now that she had thought it her duty to allow Augustus

to suppose that she had never cared for him—it would be too dreadful if she were still obliged to be reserved, to conceal her real feelings from Mr. Mandeville. For Lucy had been so deeply imbued with her father's spirit of confiding trust, that her greatest suffering was the obligation to disguise or conceal her feelings from those she loved.

And it was this rare ingenuousness which was probably her greatest safeguard in this hour of trial and difficulty.

CHAPTER V.

EARLY LONGINGS.

“How long it is since we have heard from Lucy!” said Harriet one morning, when they saw the postman again pass the door without bringing any letter.

Mary thought it was indeed a long time, but she felt too deeply about her aunt to utter her thoughts, for she knew her mother rather wondered at her extreme fondness for Aunt Lucy; nor could she understand the strange anxiety felt by the child to be loved by her. Lucy’s last kisses when they parted, and the

expression of her eyes had been so full of affection—she had pressed the child to her heart so tenderly, and was so loth to let her go from her embrace—that Mary had lived for many a day on the recollection of it ; and her dreams at night had been tinged with sunny hues and happy feelings, for her aunt's loving eyes seemed always to be looking at her.

But gradually the feeling became less vivid, or rather it was replaced by the misgivings she had felt during the last week of their residence at Ilminster, as to whether Lucy loved her at all. And then, when she went, as she had done formerly, to the picture for consolation, it appeared so much less beautiful than her real aunt was, that it had partly lost its charm.

Truly we may ask, in the words of Mr. Sandes:

“ Were childhood's sorrows trifles to the child ?

Did griefs whose load appears to man so light,

Seem to the nursling an infliction mild ?

Were boyhood's days indeed so calm and bright ?

Record the narrative of youth's career,
And tell the truthful story of some heart
Making its way through shyness, hope, and fear,
Playing upon its little world its part.
Hath it in sorrow and regret no share ?
Can life for it no real woes unfold ?
The picture rightly viewed will cease to wear
That falsely coloured show where some behold
In life's first hours a golden halcyon time,
Rich stored with pleasures lost to manhood's prime."

With Mary, the remembrance of her aunt's coldness before that last kiss, would obtrude itself and depress her spirits, and she found her only way was to distract her thoughts from it entirely.

So she learnt all her lessons with great zeal, and found, to her surprise, that she could fix her attention, and learn much more quickly than before she left home.

The fact is, that the deep affection her aunt inspired, had developed her feelings and faculties in no small degree.

Mary's mind was of that strong and deter-

mined sort which will, in a great degree, form its own fate, instead of being moulded by circumstances, as Lucy's had been ; and she was able thus, in early childhood, to direct her thoughts into another channel with more success than Lucy had experienced when she endeavoured to fly from the suffering produced by the loss of her parents and the supposed infidelity of Augustus.

Mary soon made such progress in her studies that her parents were amazed ; for they had formerly fancied she was too dull and stupid to learn easily.

But now Mary began to wish very much that a letter should come from Ilminster ; and the last few mornings she had watched the postman's arrival with great anxiety, and ran down to the bottom of the garden to ask him if there were not any.

At last, one morning he put a letter into her hand, and Mary ran in to give it to her mother,

while her cheeks glowed and her eyes sparkled with expectation. They were at breakfast, and Harriet read it aloud, as was her wont.

Nothing appeared to have happened to cause this unusually long silence: the letter was written apparently in good spirits, and Mr. Mandeville was rather better.

Quite at the end, Lucy mentioned that Augustus Derwent had returned from abroad, and that the reports they had heard of his marriage turned out to be false: that he had bought one of the upland farms on the Rollston estate: that he intended to live there and superintend the education of his brother's child, Sir Frederic Renton. "He has succeeded very well abroad, and made a good fortune," wrote Mrs. Mandeville; "but he intends to live quite as a farmer, and cultivate the land he has purchased."

"Well, how glad I am Lucy is safely married," said Harriet, as she finished reading the

letter: "for Mr. Derwent will be sure to soon lose all his fortune again. And now I dare say he will marry one of the Flamborough girls: Cecilia would be just the wife for him, and they live so close to that Upland Farm, that they will have plenty of opportunities of meeting."

And Harriet, with her innate love of match-making, fell into a pleasant musing on the subject.

After a few moments, she added aloud—

"And now I am determined to write to Augustus, and ask him to stand godfather to my child, (she was expecting to be confined soon), and then I can say something about Cecilia Flamborough. I always liked her so much better than any of the others, and I do think she is something like Lucy, so it will just do."

A few days afterwards, another letter came from Lucy, in which she said that little Sir Frederic Renton was come to pass a few

days with them, while his uncle was gone to London.

"He was a strange boy," she said, "so wild and unmanageable, that she rather dreaded his example for her own children; but as he seemed to have taken a great fancy to her, Mr. Mandeville, with his usual kind consideration, had suggested that she might perhaps be able to exercise some good influence over him."

She said that Augustus had dined with them twice; but that his time was so fully occupied with his farming pursuits, that he could not often come as far as Ilminster, although Mr. Mandeville repeatedly invited him.

In another letter, written the week before Christmas, Lucy said,

"That wild boy Frederic is now here again, and he insisted upon sleeping in the haunted room. He seems not the least afraid, and yet he makes my hair stand

on end with the account of all he sees and hears there. He has, however, fortunately obeyed my orders, and said nothing of it all to the children."

Harriet also received several letters from Miss Flamborough, who had entered only too zealously into her views, and evinced great admiration for the handsome Mr. Derwent.

"He was quite a reformed character," wrote Cecilia; "and it is so beautiful to see him instructing his wild young nephew, and occupying himself about the poor people."

Harriet was now in daily expectation of her confinement, and she received a letter from Augustus expressing his sincere thanks for her kindness in writing and asking him to stand godfather to her child.

She had felt very ill for some days, and could not leave her sofa.

One morning a letter came from Cecilia Flamborough, which agitated Harriet ex-

tremely, and Mary was getting frightened at her mother's anxious looks and perplexing words.

"This is very sad," said Harriet, handing the letter to her husband, for she had felt too much to read it aloud, "and I don't know what to make of it."

Mr. Lennox read the letter, and then said,—

"I do not see much harm in this; I think it is a little bit of spite of the fair Cecilia, because she finds her and your idea of captivating the rich young farmer does not answer. Depend upon it, this is the case," he continued as he saw the tears in his wife's eyes.

"Poor Lucy!" said Harriet, who felt low, and ill, and could not be easily comforted. "Poor dear Lucy! perhaps, after all, I did wrong to urge her to marry Mr. Mandeville, for she certainly loved Augustus dearly. When one is confined to a sick bed, as I have been

for the last week, one thinks, and thinks, and many things look so different from what they do when one is full of health and strength, and busied with all one's usual employments. I had some misgivings before, from what Lucy said in her last letter, and now this confirms my fears.

“ Nonsense ! do you think your sister could so far forget her duty as to be led away by any young man, were he ever so captivating ? ”

“ I don't know,” said Harriet, in a querulous tone : “ he was her first love ; ” and she whispered something in her husband's ear.

Mary had listened in breathless curiosity, — “ her aunt forgot her duty,” — what could they mean ? “ Her first love.” And the precocious child pondered on, and remembered several little things which had perplexed her at the time, and which now

helped her to make a sort of romance about her aunt.

"Did Mr. Augustus live at Rollston Court, that old place where we had the pic-nic?" enquired she, suddenly looking up.

"Yes child ; why do you ask ?" said Harriet.

"Because—because I remember it so well ; I like the old house very much," said Mary, with an embarrassed air ; and then she ran into her room and burst into tears.

Yet she scarcely knew why she cried, although she felt frightened about her aunt. She had considered her the most perfect being ever formed, and she dreaded more than anything else that Lucy should in any way fall short of the ideal she had created.

There was an instinctive dread of sin, and admiration for goodness in Mary that was very unusual. It seemed her great

actuating principle, and the attraction she felt for Lucy was because she thought her so perfect.

Of late she had not prayed so much, because she had been in what she called a dark state. The misgiving she had gradually felt about her aunt's love for her, had engendered a sort of dull despondency. But now the anxiety was so keen, the fear so dreadful, that she threw herself on her knees, and prayed that her aunt might be kept from all harm—that she might never be disappointed in her.

“Perhaps I am selfish,” said the young metaphysician, as she rose from her knees; “and that it is for my happiness that I have been praying, for I should be so miserable if—if—aunt forgot her duty.”

And then she half smiled at her own vehemence, and reflected that she knew nothing of her danger, or why aunt Lucy was to fail:

it was all vague and indistinct. Although it seemed that there was a great danger impending over Lucy, yet what this precisely was, she could not divine.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LAST LETTER.

It was Christmas Eve, and Mr. Mandeville was sitting at his old fashioned black oak escritoire. The dark wainscoated walls of the large room, which was called the Master's Study, were only dimly lighted by the two candles which burned on the carved shelves which projected from the antique writing table or rather armoire. For the richly carved doors of it on each side, and the sets of drawers in the recess of the middle, reached up nearly to the ceiling.

Contrary to his usual custom, he had locked the door, for he did not wish to be interrupted. He was writing something that no one was to see at present, not even Lucy, although it was addressed to her.

His hand trembled, and he often paused, and appeared to consider deeply; and sometimes he laid down the pen and clasped his hands together. The large old family Bible was near him, and he had been looking at the first page, which contained a sort of chronicle of his family for nearly two hundred years. The last name was his own, written by his mother, and the same fair, delicate writing had recorded his father's death three years after his birth.

Reuben Mandeville scarcely remembered either of his parents, and having had no very near relations, his life had been peculiarly solitary before his marriage. Lucy therefore was his all, the only being who

had called forth his deep affections, and he loved her now perhaps more dearly than ever.

He had never inserted his marriage in this Bible, or the birth of his children : he now recorded the event and then, without quite thinking what he was doing, he proceeded to write the word 'died' after his own name.

When he saw what he had done, he started and thought, "Not yet, oh no, I do not wish to die yet ; for I know Lucy will at first be miserable."

"Ha ! what was that?" he thought again, starting. "How weak and foolish I have become. It must be Lucy knocking at the door. Come in," he said, without remembering that it was locked, as he hastily concealed the letter he had been writing.

Another knock was heard, but he now remarked that the sound appeared to come from behind his *escritoire*, and not from

the door, which was at the farther end of the long room; and there was something strange and almost awful in the hollow echoing sound.

He could not avoid remembering the numerous superstitious stories he had heard of the death-knock, and that led his thoughts to the haunted room, and the strange discovery they had made of the child's bones at the bottom of the unknown staircase. He also recollected, that the wall behind his *escritoire* must join that room, although there was no communication to it from this part of the house, and that it was on a lower level.

"Well," thought he, as a third mysterious knock seemed almost to vibrate through his frame, "God permits sometimes such sounds as these to be warnings of an approaching end. I trust I am prepared. Only, perhaps, I ought to have considered this before," he

continued, as he took out a large document from one of the drawers, and then carefully looked it over.

“ ‘ The whole property to my beloved wife, that she may have the entire disposal of it.’

“ Of course she will leave it to the children,” he said, as he perused the will. “ Of course—and yet if she should marry, as she will and must—Derwent will then become the possessor of all my property.”

Mr. Mandeville had made this will shortly after his marriage, when both he and his wife imagined that Augustus was married.

“ He seems now entirely cured of his speculating propensities,” thought Mr. Mandeville; “ and yet the temptation of getting eighty thousand pounds entirely at his own disposal will be very great; more than I ought to allow. The will must be altered,” thought he, with an anxious look, “ and no time should

be lost. Lucy must have only a life interest in the greater portion, though I should like to give her some at her own disposal: the children's fortunes must be made secure from all speculations. Fool that I was, not to think of this before ! And my life so uncertain too," he said, with increasing agitation.

Then hastily rising, he rushed towards the bell, and rang it violently.

It was such an unusual occurrence for Mr. Mandeville to ring his study bell, that Lucy, who heard the loud and impatient tone, ran from the dining room.

Her husband had played with the children that evening with even more than usual glee ; yet she had remarked that he seemed much tired afterwards ; and her fears for his health, which of late she seemed almost to have forgotten, were suddenly revived.

She longed to follow him to his study, but there was something in his manner when he

said, "I must write some letters to-night in my study, so do not let me be disturbed,"—which prevented her.

But now, as the bell sounded, she was the first to reach the door. It was locked. She knocked loudly, but no one came.

Then she called the servants, and they endeavoured to break open the door. It was some minutes before this could be effected; and Lucy's fears amounted to agony during the suspense.

"He must be ill, and he may be dying," she thought; "why will he not unlock the door?"

At last they succeeded in breaking it down, and Lucy rushed in.

After ringing the bell, Mr. Mandeville had returned to his *scrutoire*, and taken out a sheet of paper, with the intention of writing down the draft of a new will.

But he could scarcely hold the pen; his


hands sank down on his knees, and his head fell on the Bible, which was open at the place where he had lately written the word "died" after his own name.

There was no struggle, apparently no pain; for when they lifted up his head, his countenance had a look of peaceful happiness, and his eyes were closed as if in slumber.

"He cannot be dead; he must have fallen asleep," said Lucy; for she could not believe that those lips were closed for ever; that his eyes would never look on her again! And without one last word, one assurance that he was satisfied with her—oh! it could not be.

Yet how cold his forehead felt; and it would not get warm, though she covered it with her burning kisses.

The doctor had been sent for, and till he arrived, Lucy continued to chafe her husband's cold hands in her own, and to hang over him



with a sort of dreadful fear that seemed to turn her to stone.

She could not cry ; she would not believe that he was dead ; but at last the doctor arrived : and then she knew the moment was come when she must hear the fatal sentence : she covered her eyes, as if she were trying to shrink from the conviction, and fell senseless on the ground.

CHAPTER VII.

BAD NEWS.

ON that same Christmas eve Harriet Lennox was confined at Rufyn Rectory. She gave birth to a boy, who only lived a few hours, and the following day and night she was in great danger.

Mary passed the second night at the door, for she was not allowed to enter the room.

She was almost surprised to find how dearly she loved her mother; and yet she remembered, with a feeling of self-reproach, that she had never prayed for her with that anxious

fervour she had felt when petitioning God for her aunt,—that she had often repeated the words, “ bless papa and mamma,” without thinking of what she had said.

So she knelt down in the passage outside her mother’s door, and cried bitterly, for she felt sure she must be very wicked.

She had seen the poor little dead child carried away, and she knew it was going to be put into that cold churchyard; and the thought made her so miserable, that she endeavoured to remember some of the texts in Scripture which tell of a resurrection to happiness in another life.

Her memory was so good, that she could recall many passages, and she began to repeat :
“ It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.”
“ Eyes have not seen, nor ear heard, neither

hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him."

"But that child could not have loved God. It could have done no good or harm," was a thought which perplexed her for some time: then she remembered our Saviour said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

So she began to hope that her little brother was now in that kingdom,—that it was a very beautiful, happy place,—and that she and aunt Lucy, and her parents, might all meet there.

And she longed for the time to come, for she was afraid this world was very miserable; at least to her it must be, because she found it so very hard to be good, and she could not bear to look at what was ugly, or to feel pain and cold, as she often did.

She shuddered as she rested her head

against the cold skirting board, and half wished to go to her own bed. But a feeling of self-imposed suffering determined her to stay.

She ought to pray without ceasing, to atone for her former indifference. And this longing to atone, is our first natural impulse; when the feeling of responsibility is awakened in our hearts, when religion stirs within us.

So felt those dark, undeveloped nations in the early ages, when they first embraced Christianity, and yet only partially studied the scriptures.

So felt the early converts as soon as the pure teaching and strengthening guidance of the Apostles and their immediate successors were removed.

It impelled them to seek repose for their souls in self-tortures, fastings, and bodily punishments; for their minds, like that of Mary, were in their infancy, and had not

discovered how unavailing such actions are to procure real peace.

They had yet to learn, what countries and individuals are so slow to comprehend—that God loves not self-imposed penances ; but the sacrifice of a meek and quiet spirit—making the best of the trials He sends ; not inventing them for ourselves in “ will-worship,” and “ neglecting of the body ;” accepting the sacrifice of Christ : not offering up other holocausts, like Cain.

Mary strove and wrestled to the best of her abilities, and prayed with many remorseful tears, that her mother might recover.

By degrees the conviction came over her mind that her mother was safe, because she was in the hands of a kind Father.

A feeling of peace succeeded that of misery, and towards morning slumber overpowered her heavy eyelids.

The doctor found the child lying in the

cold passage, when he left Mrs. Lennox ; and without waking her, made the nurse carry her to her room, and place her in a warm bed.

She had been so worn out with watching and anxiety, that she now slept too soundly to awake. But the warmth of the bed produced such a pleasant sensation, that Mary had a beautiful dream towards morning, and awoke with the feeling that she was at Ilminster, and that aunt Lucy was looking at her with loving and approving eyes.

The impression was so blissful, that Mary dreaded to open her eyes, for the recollection of the preceding anxious day began to dawn upon her mind.

Then she heard the sound of heavy footsteps near her bed, and knew it must be her mother's old nurse, Sarah Jodkins.

So she started up, and inquired after her mother's health.

"She baint no better at all, at all, Miss :

though 'tis I as says it, there never was a truer sayin', 'that misfortunes never come single,' for if there baint a letter comed from your aunt with a great black seal, and—

"From aunt Lucy!" exclaimed Mary, as she jumped out of bed in great dismay.

"Don't you be taking on now, Miss; just as if it was not trouble enough to have the mistress ill, and the blessed baby dead, but you must go and sit up all night in the cold passage; and you is the only child left out of all that's come and gone, and nobody there to look after you, more shame upon us all."

"Never mind me," said Mary, in some surprise at Jodkins's unwonted solicitude about her; "but do, pray, tell me about aunt Lucy."

"How should the like o' me know anythink about it. Perhaps it's Mr. Mandeville that's dead, for I did hear master say to the

doctor something about it. Ah, well! we must all die, as I used to be always a tellin' my poor Jeremiah when he would take a drop too much; but he never believed me, never! till his hour came; for he said I always looked on the dark side of everything, and he—"

"I hope I may go to Mamma now," interrupted Mary, who had hastily dressed herself, while Jodkins had been slowly muttering her complaints.

"Well, we'll see what the doctor says, He was very angered when he saw you a-lying in the passage last night, and says he to me—— Stop, Missy, don't you go a flying off without your shoes that way, just as if you hadn't chilblains that's always a breaking; and no wonder, when we was obliged to live here, in this cold country: 'tis a wonder any of us is alive."

"Bless the child! if she hasn't gone in

without leave," continued Mrs. Jodkins, as she followed Mary to her mistress's room, lifting up her hands and eyes in a state of dire, but, perhaps, to her almost luxurious dismay at everything.

For Mrs. Jodkins was one of those people who seem to thrive upon misfortune; who appear to require the excitement of it to call forth their full powers, and perhaps she really meant what she said, when moaning over Harriet's frequent illnesses—

"Ah! then, indeed, Missis do really enjoy very had health."

Mr. Lennox had read the letter with the black seal, which was directed to his wife; and on consulting the doctor, it was agreed that Harriet should not learn its contents till she became stronger.

The doctor allowed Mary to remain now in her mother's room, for, in spite of Mrs.

Jodkins's declaration that she was no better, Mrs. Lennox was now out of danger, and with proper care and quiet, he trusted that she would soon recover her strength.

In the meantime Mr. Lennox was considerably embarrassed what to do.

The letter he had received, was from Dr. Short, to acquaint him with Mr. Mandeville's sudden death, and that his poor wife was in such a dangerous state from the shock, that he almost despaired of her life.

Mr. Lennox could not leave Harriet at present, yet he saw how necessary it was that Lucy should have some friend near her at this trying hour; and his dilemma was increased by his little daughter's fears about her aunt.

Mary had contrived, with her usual perseverance when interested about anything, to ascertain from him the whole state of the case; and her own precocious imaginings, and

surmises about Lucy's former unhappiness tended to add a vague dread of some unknown evil, to the positive misfortune of her uncle's death.

CHAPTER VIII.

BEREAVEMENT.

THE day when Lucy had that first and most unexpected interview with Augustus, she made a full and unreserved confession to her husband of all her thoughts and feelings on the subject, and ended by saying, "that it would be better that I should not see him again."

Mr. Mandeville, however, was not of the same opinion, particularly when he heard that Augustus had actually purchased the farm near Rollston.

Having full confidence in his wife, he thought it better that they should sometimes see Mr. Derwent; and he went the next day to call upon him, and invited him to dinner.

So they met three or four times, and Lucy succeeded in her endeavour to treat him as an old friend, and to dispel any traces of embarrassment from her manner and countenance.

Augustus was not so successful: and after making the attempt in vain to look with the indifference on Lucy that he desired, he determined to go to London, and seek for some employment that might serve to interest him and occupy his time in a useful manner.

For his great and sole object now was to reform and educate his nephew, and, if possible, gain enough to reinstate him at some future time in his family possessions.

This had been the cause of his absence at

the time of Mr. Mandeville's sudden death, and he had secretly resolved, if possible, never to see Lucy again.

But when he heard of the dreadful catastrophe, and of Lucy's dangerous illness, he hastened to return to his farm.

He then proceeded to Dr. Short's; and endeavouring to conceal his anxiety by assuming an air of indifference, he ascertained from him that Lucy was still in a most dangerous state.

"And has she no friend with her? has not her sister been sent for?" inquired Augustus.

"Mrs. Lennox is very ill, I find, and in too delicate a state to allow her husband even to come; and poor Mrs. Mandeville has no one with her but Mrs. Flamborough, and you know she is not the kind of person to be of much use."

"No, indeed, she is not," said Augustus, with a look of involuntary dismay.

"It is natural you should feel much interest about her, and so forth," said the good-natured little doctor; "for, of course, you must have known her ever since you were children, and so forth!"

Dr. Short had an inveterate habit of saying; "and so forth," when he felt embarrassed, as he was so now; for he was too shrewd an observer of human nature, and he had too much admiration for Lucy, whom he had known all his life, not to suspect something of the real state of her feelings. Yet he was a very punctilious little man, with the highest sense of decorum; and suspecting something of what had passed between Lucy and Augustus in former years, he hardly possessed *sang froid* enough to mention him to her.

"Could anything be done? could I be of any use in any way?" enquired Augustus.

Dr. Short took several pinches of snuff with unusual haste, while he shook his head with a

perplexed air. Augustus saw but too plainly that he fully entered into the awkwardness of his situation ; so he said, with as much indifference as he could contrive to assume—

“ I see you think I can be of no use, therefore I will say no more : only remember if—if at any time you think—that—that”—

“ I understand you, quite,” said the kind doctor, “ and will certainly tell Miss Lennox, ah—I mean Mrs. Mandeville—as soon as I have an opportunity—of your kind offers, of your kind wishes, and so forth.”

Lucy was lonely indeed, for she had scarcely any intimate friend. She was too unlike most of her acquaintances to be easily understood by them.

Mr. Mandeville’s primitive way of living also had been so different from that of most persons of his fortune, that although he had been universally esteemed, he had not lived on very intimate terms with any one.

“ Lie down, and close thy wearied eyes in slumber—
Fold up the page of thought—let memory’s brood
No longer with regrets thy soul encumber ;
Bar not the prospect of success from shining.
What though thy life hath gone astray and err’d !
Take up its threads, their meshes re-combining ;
Toil on, by former failures undeterr’d.”

CHAPTER IX.

GRIEF.

ABOUT six months after Mr. Mandeville's death, Lucy was sitting one evening at her husband's old oak escritoire.

She was alone in that dark wainscoted room, but it was a fine summer evening, and the last slanting rays of the setting sun shone through the narrow casements, and illumined her slender figure.

She was very thin and pale, yet, perhaps, more lovely than ever, for there was an expression of suffering in the quiver of her beau-

tiful lips, and anxiety in her violet eyes, that was very touching.

She was dressed in deep mourning, and according to the fashion of that day, all her hair was concealed under the close-fitting white cap; but this, though so trying to many, served to enhance the transparent whiteness of her complexion, and to increase the beauty of her dark pencilled eye-brow.

As she leant her head on her hand, and looked down upon the Bible which lay open before her, her long dark eye-lashes overshadowed her cheek, and she occasionally brushed away the tears, if they prevented her reading the Bible, although otherwise they ran unheeded down her cheeks.

Mrs. Flamborough had remained with Lucy during the first fortnight after Mr. Mandeville's death, and had been of infinite use in saving her from the pain of entering into the

sad details of business attending such an event.

She was a kind-hearted old lady, but without the tact, or keen perceptions, requisite to render her, in a more intimate way, a comfort to a person, who, like Lucy, was suffering from a most complicated grief: and her well-meaning condolence, and the praise she was constantly lavishing on Lucy, for having been such an exemplary wife, sometimes added considerably to the widow's sorrow.

It was humiliating to her to receive praises she felt unconscious of deserving; and ever since her husband's death, her sensitive conscience of course exaggerated her faults, and her want of affection for him. And she thought hers was a greater grief than any one could comprehend, than even Harriet, for she had never entered into her real feelings about Augustus.

At times she derived a sort of wild transi-

tory consolation from the thought that Augustus would comprehend, and must feel for her fully and entirely.

Yet she never mentioned his name, and she was quite resolved never to see him again.

"Never," she often repeated to herself, although in her husband's letter, which now lay on the Bible before her, he advised the contrary.

But as yet she had scarcely ventured to read that part of the letter where his name was mentioned, although she pondered every day upon the advice Mr. Mandeville gave in other parts of it, about the children, and various matters.

It was a long letter, and had been written at different times.

Part of it had been begun some time before Augustus had returned, and Lucy remarked, with an ever-recurring pang, the

hand writing was less steady after that period, although the tone in which it was written was quite as cheerful and kind. And the expressions of his love and admiration for her were, if possible, warmer than before.

It was only finished on the day of his death, and it ended with these words :—

“And now, dearest love, adieu ! Should I be the object of the Almighty’s mercy, and be permitted in His presence to enjoy an eternity of happiness, oh ! that he may make me the humble instrument of His providence, to watch over, guide, and protect you.

“Yours most gratefully and fondly—*eternally* yours.

“R. M.”

This evening Lucy read over that part of the letter where Augustus’s name was men-

tioned, and for the first time she pondered over the words.

“ If you find, on due consideration, that he has become the sort of person your father would have really approved of: if, after sufficient time has been given for his trial of the kind of life he has chosen, you find that he is entirely cured of his passion for speculation, and that it has not been only from the absence of temptation hitherto—for you know he could have had none during the years he was in America; then I advise you to consent, and I have no doubt but that his assistance will be most valuable in the education of our children, particularly of Hubert. For you know that child has a most strange disposition, and one which you can scarcely understand. Remember, then, darling Lucy, that you have my full consent, and that I pray God to bless your marriage with him.”

As Lucy read these words she covered

her face with her hands, and said to her self—

“Oh, never, never!” and as if to strengthen her resolution, she looked at the first page of the old Bible, where her husband had written the word “died” after his own name.

“Dear, dear Reuben!” she said, as with a feeling of reverence she kissed the spot; and the thought that she would strive so to live that she might meet him in heaven, gave a feeling of peace, if not of hope, to her aching heart, and for the time fully satisfied her.

Then she prayed long and forcibly, to be guided; and the sunbeams which kissed her forehead as they died away, left her tranquil, if not happy.

But it was not often she could succeed in bringing herself into this peaceful state, for her grief was generally impetuous and violent, and she shrank with horror from the thought of Augustus.

She generally passed an hour, after she had finished her children's lessons, alone in Mr. Mandeville's study, and of late, she liked to sit in the chair where he had died.

Her first impulse led her to quit Ilminster and go to her sister, who was still too unwell to travel.

So about six weeks after Mr. Mandeville's death, and as soon as Lucy was well enough, she set out with Charlotte and Hubert for Rufyn.

But her misery there became even greater than before : she had less necessary occupation, and Harriet, with her usual well-meaning but blundering kindness, endeavoured to save her even from the trouble of attending to the children ; so her grief soon bordered on distraction, and Mary's heart was torn by the sight of her aunt's woe.

Yet the child had longed for her arrival, and in the excitement of her great love, had fondly

imagined she should be able to do or say something to comfort her.

And her disappointment was all the more bitter, at finding that she seemed scarcely aware of her presence.

She seldom spoke, or even looked at her ; and yet she thought her aunt so much more lovely in her grief, that she admired her more than ever, and at times was painfully depressed by her inability to do anything that would produce a pleasant impression, or even awaken one of those smiles which used to fill her with delight.

After two dreary months—when, as Mary thought, the sun never seemed to shine, or anybody to look happy, and which certainly none of the party enjoyed, except old Mrs. Jodkins, who indulged to her heart's content in ominous shakes of the head and woful uplifting of her hands—Lucy made up her mind to return home.

Mrs. Jodkins begged to be allowed to go with her for a few months, as her mistress was now pretty well again ; and she wanted to see her daughter, who was ill, and had lately lost her husband, a labourer in Hartfield village.

Mrs. Jodkins belonged to Hartfield herself, and having nursed Harriet when she was a baby, offered to go and attend her in her first confinement, and she had remained at RUFYN ever since.

She would not receive any wages after the first month, but hired herself out in the neighbourhood as monthly nurse, or to attend on sick people ; and during the intervals when she was not employed, made herself very useful to Harriet in many ways.

Yet she never showed the affection she certainly must have felt, except by finding fault : and she had a scolding asperity of manner which was extremely disagreeable.

“ Now don't you take on so, Miss Mary,”

said she, the evening before she was going to leave ; “ arn’t you ashamed of yerself to cry so because your aunt is going away, when you know very well you have been miserable all the time she has been here? Why, your’e growin’ to a skeleton, and if you are a goin’ to feel things that way all your life, you’ll never live to be old.”

“ I am glad you are going with aunt Lucy,” said Mary, drying her eyes.

“ Ah, I thought so, for you don’t care to lose me, I know ; you never cared for nobody in the wide world but your aunt.”

“ Oh, but I do, I do love you very much, dear Joddy, and you are always so kind to me when I really want you.”

“ Well, I believe you try to be a good child, but you has a deal of trouble with yourself, I knows ; and you are so odd-like and contrary, nobody can’t lead you. Now cheer up, Missy, and if your aunt lives through this, and don’t

go on a fretting her life away, she'll no doubt look kindly on you again."

Mary was half-ashamed that nurse should have read her thoughts so well, and yet it raised her spirits to think that perhaps that rough creature might be of some use to her aunt.

Lucy wished to return home because she felt it was her duty to do so, and to live in the old house at Ilminster; but she had a greater horror of it than ever, and although she had derived but little benefit and pleasure from her visit to Harriet, yet when the moment of separation came, her tears at parting from her sister were very bitter.

Her children, however, seemed pleased at the prospect of returning home; for Charlotte did not like the small house and frugal way of living at Rufyn, and its cold situation did not agree with Hubert, who had been in a dull and weakly state all the time.

He was unable to attend to his lessons, and

consequently was in extreme disgrace with everybody, and deeply humiliated in his own estimation.

He implicitly believed people when they told him he was a dunce, and would never be able to learn anything; yet he kept the pain this conviction gave him entirely to himself, and his depression could not even be dispelled by Mary, who sometimes whispered gently in his ear, when no one was listening, that "she was sure he would learn some day, because she used to find the same difficulty."

Still he shook his head with a sort of mournful sullenness, and could not be comforted. But he said at parting, when he kissed his cousin—

"How I wish you were going with us; for I think if you could play with me when the sun shines in our garden at home, I should be able to learn afterwards when I go in to lessons."

During the first month after her return home, Lucy felt increased wretchedness ; but she made great exertions to resume her usual occupations and duties, and to force her attention to teach the children.

She also ventured one fine evening in early spring to visit her husband's study,—that sad room which she had never entered since the day of his death.

She trembled as she opened the door, for she dreaded the sight of all the familiar objects it contained ; yet on entering it she was surprised at the feeling of peace which came over her.

She went and sat down in her husband's chair, and opened his Bible.

Then as she looked on some of his favourite passages, a strange conviction that his spirit was near, gave her a sort of awful calmness, and she was able to pray more fervently than she had ever done since his death.

After this, Mrs. Mandeville was able to fulfil her duties with more pleasure, and was rewarded by seeing that Hubert made some progress in his studies.

CHAPTER X.

MYSTERIOUS SOUNDS.

ON the evening when Lucy first read that portion of her husband's letter where he spoke of Augustus, she remained longer than usual in deep meditation at the old escritoire, and it was almost dark, when she was suddenly startled by hearing the cry as of a child in pain.

It sounded like what she had heard in the haunted room ; and then she remembered with horror that the wall behind the escritoire

where she sat was probably a part of that very room, although, from its being on a different level, it had not occurred to her before.

She hastily groped her way towards the door; but before she could reach it the mysterious sound was repeated—a low wail of agony, and then she heard a voice calling softly—

“Lucy!”

It sounded like that of her husband, but from afar off, and certainly as if from the room, behind the *escritoire*.

In her haste to leave the room she stumbled over a table, and fell with considerable violence against a carved ebony cabinet.

She was more frightened than hurt, yet she called loudly for assistance.

Jodkins happened fortunately to be on the staircase which was near the door, and heard her cry.

She had a light in her hand, and after helping Lucy up, and examining a bruise on her forehead, which had knocked against the cabinet, the old woman gave vent to her indignation.

“I always know’d what would come of sitting in this here melancholy room! as if it warn’t enough so sit moping here by day, but you must stay here in the dark too. Why, you are a shaking all over, and is this the way to please Mr. Mandeville, I should like to know? There, come and look at the children in their beds a sleeping so sweetly, and if you go on a loitering in this here room in the dark again, I shall take away the key, and hide it.”

Lucy certainly dreaded to return there the next evening; but she was resolved to conquer the feeling, because she had enjoyed so many peaceful moments while reading the Bible in

her husband's chair ; but she did not remain after sunset, and no mysterious sounds came to disturb her repose.

CHAPTER XI.

FAMILY FAILINGS.

"OH! Mamma, I have seen Frederick," exclaimed Charlotte, as she rushed into the drawing-room through the open window. "He is in the garden, and wants so much to see you."

Lucy felt displeased at his intruding; and a sort of vague dread lest Augustus should have sent him, made her angry.

"Oh, do see him, Mamma! and don't be angry with poor Frederick, for he is so afraid of his uncle; he says that if Mr. Derwent knew

Frederick had been in our garden, he would be so angry."

"Then why did he come there?" enquired Lucy, somewhat softened.

"He could not help it, for he was playing at trap-ball with Leonard Smith, and the ball came over our wall, so he climbed over to get it; and then when he saw us, he came and spoke so kindly, and I saw the tears in his eyes when he asked how you were; and he said he would give anything to see you; so do let him come in, will you dear Mamma?"

"Well I will come with you into the garden but—"

Lucy felt that she could not explain why she objected to see the boy, and so she relented, and allowed Charlotte to lead her towards the farther end of the garden.

"How very kind this is," said Frederick, with a beaming smile that lightened up his

countenance not generally prepossessing, and softened his usually harsh expression, while he seized Lucy's hand, and pressed it with an air of admiring reverence to his lips.

Sir Frederick Renton was now a tall and handsome boy, and had become apparently much more amiable than he was as a child.

Lucy admired his beauty, and was amused by his wit ; but she was often much startled by an expression on his face, that made her feel as if he were harbouring a serpent's venom beneath that fair exterior. On that evening, however, there was a somewhat shy bashfulness in his air, which softened his proud and domineering look, and he spoke in a low and gentle tone.

He mentioned, with quivering lips, the anxiety he and his uncle had suffered ; "yet it has been most trying," he added, "that uncle Derwent has never allowed me to come and in-

quire after you. It seems so very hard, does it not? and I am sure you would pity him and let him come sometimes, if you knew how very miserable he is."

Lucy shook her head and turned away.

"I cannot, indeed, see any one," she said; and then, fearing lest the boy would think her unkind, she put out her hand and wished him "good bye."

Sir Frederick again pressed it to his lips, and without saying another word, rushed away, and hastily scaled the wall at the place where he had come into the garden.

But he did not resume his game of ball with the young Smiths, for he told them he had forgotten that he was forced to return home early that evening.

So he walked towards Rollston Farm, or rather ran with bounding steps, for he was in unusually high spirits, and his proud features had entirely lost the subdued expression

which had touched and pleased Lucy during their short interview.

Augustus had not returned home when Frederick arrived ; and as the boy felt less in the humour for study than usual, he tried to amuse himself by throwing stones into the water.

“ You could not throw the stone as far as the willow tree on yonder bank, though,” said Bill Crompton, a neighbouring farmer’s son ; “ and that’s what Joe Bevis, your father’s keeper, could ; I saw him do’en.”

“ Oh, that I could ; I’ll bet you five shillings that I will throw it farther than that.”

“ Done,” said Bill ; “ only take this here stone that’s marked across, that we may find it if you don’t send it into the water, as I expect, and I don’t believe you’ve got the five shillings to pay me if I win.”

“ Never fear,” said Sir Frederick, as with

an air of proud determination he hurled the stone across the water.

"Well done!" exclaimed Bill, with a mixture of annoyance and admiration on his broad honest face.

"There's no denying that it shot past the willow, and 'twas foolish of me to lay that wager, for I ought to have knowed yer was as powerful as old Sir Rupert—him as leapt across the chasm at the Mill Dyke; but I hope you won't come to as bad an end as he, or as your father neither, as far as that goes."

"What was the end of old Sir Rupert? I never knew, except that his ghost is said to haunt the brown staircase at Rollston."

"Did ye never hear tell of the beautiful Lavinia as lived in the house at Ilminster as belongs to Mrs. Mandeville, and how her child was murdered by Sir Rupert, and was never buried?"

"Oh, yes, I've heard all that foolish story,"

said Sir Frederick with a look of contempt: "and I've slept in the room and seen his ghost too; but now where are the five shillings I have won?"

Bill felt in his capacious pockets, and pulled out a worn leather purse.

"Here is only three and six, but I'll—"

"Look here," said his companion; "do you see that withered branch on yonder fir-tree, on the top of the hill? Now, if I hit that with the stone, you shall pay me five shillings more; but if I don't we shall be quits."

"Well, I think I may venture now, for I'm sure you'll never reach that, and on such high ground, too,"

"Here goes, then," said Frederick, as he picked up a large stone, which he threw with such precision that it struck the branch, and severed it from the tree.

Augustus had approached them unobserved

and overheard the last bet, and for a moment he could not help looking on with great interest.

But when he remarked the leather purse in Bill's hand, he suddenly remembered that such apparently innocent bets as these had been the beginning of his own fatal propensity for gambling, and therefore, assuming a severe look, he rebuked his nephew for it.

"I like to see your skill," he added, as he remarked that Frederick appeared hurt by his remarks; "but, remember dear Frederick, your father and I were both ruined by this fatal passion."

"Yes; but you also twice recovered Rollston by it."

"And lost it again, I am afraid, for ever," said Augustus with a mournful look. "My farming does not answer so well here as abroad; my wheat has sold very badly."

"I'll bring you the rest by and bye," said

Bill, as he put his three-and-sixpence into Sir Frederick's hand.

"No, never mind," said Frederick, who saw the look of displeasure on his uncle's face ; "I only laid the bet for fun, and I won't have your money."

"That's a good honest lad," said Augustus, when Bill was gone ; "and with all his rough exterior, has the tact of good feeling that foolishly used to fancy was only found in the high born. He looked quite sorry when I said I got so little for my wheat."

"That's a bad job, though," said Frederick, gravely. "I am afraid you will not be able to fulfil your generous intention of sending me to College, much less to get back dear old Rollston Court. By the bye, I heard in Ilminster, that poor Mr. Mandeville had intended to purchase it, and was in treaty about it the very week he died. What a pity it was, he did not complete the business, for it

would have been such an excellent investment for his money ; in the funds, you know, it only produces five per cent., so that if he had bought Rollston,—for fifty thousand pounds, which is all they ask,—it would have been an excellent bargain. You know he left eighty thousand pounds, and all completely in his beautiful wife's power."

"How did you hear all that?" inquired Augustus, with a severe look.

"I could not help hearing what every one is talking of. There are the Smiths and the Cottals, and every one pitying her so, because she has no more idea of business than a baby, and she will be sure to be cheated and imposed on by every one. By-the-bye I may as well confess it—for I hate to deceive you dear uncle ; and indeed, I could not help it, for I would not have disobeyed your orders for worlds—but I saw that lovely creature to-day."

And Sir Frederick gave a description of his interview with Lucy, with a few additional particulars of his own invention, and a most glowing description of her charms, and of the beautiful blush that rose to her pale cheeks at the mention of his uncle's name.

"But surely she must have been annoyed at your thus intruding upon her."

"Not the least, I assure you—nothing could be more kind; and I am certain that if you—"

"Don't say a word more on the subject," exclaimed Augustus, with glowing cheeks, while he tried to assume a severe and indifferent look. "I told you never to—"

"I will say no more, indeed, on this subject; I did not mean to annoy you, quite the reverse: I thought you would not dislike to hear that—that—"

“Well, never mind, I forgive you, only never mention the subject again.”

“And hopes, and fears that kindle hope,
An undistinguishable throng ;
And gentle wishes long subdued,
Subdued and cherished long !”—

came crowding into his mind.

They walked on in silence for some moments, and Frederick occasionally looked at his uncle's face, with a sort of half-malicious, and half-satisfied glance, which, if Augustus had not been too pre-occupied to observe, would have startled and pained him.

CHAPTER XII.

MATCHMAKING.

"WELL, after all, I do believe it was very lucky my plan did not succeed, and that Augustus did not marry Cecilia," said Harriet Lennox one morning to her husband, about a year afterwards.

"Here is a nice letter from little Charlotte to our Mary."

"What a good hand the child writes ! much better than yours, my dear," said Mr. Lennox, as he glanced at the letter, and turned to his child.

"I cannot think what has happened to you all this last year; you seem to go backwards instead of forwards in your learning."

"Poor Mary was not very well, you know, for some time. Go now and play in the garden, and don't try to learn that any longer: your eyes are quite red: why, what are you crying about? I did not find any fault—you are always crying for nothing. Go, put on your bonnet, and try to get little Sukey to play with you."

Mary left the room with a slow step and suffering air, which seemed quite at variance with the word "play."

"She is the strangest child that ever was; I sometimes am really afraid she will go mad," said Harriet, when the door was closed.

"I believe it's for want of companions," she added: "Mary don't seem to care now for anything or anybody. What do you think of our going to visit Lucy this summer? Ah! I see

you dread the expense of the journey ; but you know Mr. Curzon would do the duty for you : he said so the other day, when I told him we ought to go and see poor Lucy. You know that child Hubert has become entirely unmanageable, and yet she can't make up her mind to send him to school, and now you see by this letter of Charlotte's, that they are all frightened out of their wits by that ghost. Of course, it's all folly ; yet if they do hear these strange noises, even in poor Mr. Mandeville's study, where Lucy is so fond of sitting, what are they to do ? Then it is so very lonely for poor Lucy."

"I know what you want," said Mr. Lennox, with a smile. "You are an inveterate match-maker, and you are dying now to make up a marriage between your sister and Mr. Derwent. Ah, I know that was it."

"Well, and where's the harm if I do ? what could she do better than marry a man who

has always loved her ; such an amiable good young man, and now become so steady."

"And yet my uncle always objected to him, even when he seemed to have become steady before."

"Oh, but he never was really so, you know ; and now he has been toiling away at his farm for nearly two years, and educating that young scamp of a nephew, quite like an old man, Mrs. Flamborough tells me : there can be no fear now ; and I am sure if I say so, you may believe me, for I was always so inveterate against him before."

"That's just it : your feelings lead you into extremes, and it is an awful thing, my dear, to meddle in these matters. It is much better to let things take their course."

"But they never meet, you know : Lucy has never seen him except quite by chance once or twice, and then they did not speak."

"That is her own doing ; she must be the best judge of her own conduct and feelings towards him."

"No, she is not ; she is so foolish and self-reproachful, I know."

"Well, only take care, for you know you regretted at last having persuaded her to marry poor Mr. Mandeville."

"So I did ; but that was only when I found out Augustus had never been married. You must confess it was an excellent match for Lucy, and she made such a good wife, and is rewarded for it now by his having left her so well off, and at liberty to marry whomsoever she pleases."

Mr. Lennox smiled.

"My dear Harriet, I know what you mean ; but to hear you talk, one would suppose you considered his having died was part of her reward."

"No I don't ; but, dear George, you know

I have become so very stupid since all my illnesses, I am totally unlike the bright, pretty girl you married twelve years ago."

"I'm not so young either, though, for all that ; and, dear Harriet, I often think that we have neither of us, nor even Lucy, quite fulfilled the expectations your dear father had. I don't know how it is, I seem to get so stupified by all these parish details, and we have no one like him to stir up our energies, and make us see things in their true light."

"There never was such a being certainly," said Harriet, as she lay on her sofa and clasped her hands, with a look of reverence, as she thought on her father.

"I really am afraid of your interfering with Lucy now," continued Mr. Lennox after a pause : "I think if your father could look down upon us, he would be better pleased that she should be left perfectly uninfluenced and unbiassed in this matter."

"This child writes very well certainly," continued Mr. Lennox, when he had read little Charlotte's letter; "and the account she gives of young Sir Frederick is very satisfactory."

"Yes, and what a nice match he would be for Mary, as he seems to be turning out so well."

"I thought you had just agreed that we were to have nothing to do with match-making," said Mr. Lennox with a laugh.

"Oh, of course, that was only a joke, such children as they are; besides, perhaps Sir Frederick would be too old for Mary: he might do better for Charlotte, and she is evidently very fond of him."

Harriet did not succeed in her wish to spend part of the summer with Lucy; but she perhaps half unconsciously said so much in her letters to her sister and Augustus, that it tended gradually to smooth the difficulty

there had hitherto been to their quite understanding each other.

It was evident that Charlotte had become most anxious that her mother should see Mr. Derwent, and often implored her to let him come to visit them, but Lucy would not consent ; yet she could not avoid occasionally meeting him in the evening walks she took with her children, although he had never yet ventured to speak to her.

One fine summer evening Charlotte succeeded in persuading her mother to drive to Hartfield and walk on the downs ; for she said the air there did Hubert so much good, and she wanted besides to run down the slopes.

Lucy had never been there since her husband died ; for she felt the same scrupulous wish to cancel the past, as if he were still alive.

She consented, however, now, feeling sure that Augustus would not intrude upon her

there. And she was right, although his nephew had told him of Charlotte's success.

"They are going to walk over the downs, and the carriage is to come round to meet them, near the gate of Rollston," continued Frederick. "I thought you would not like to meet them, so I tell you ; because if you go to the labourers in the north hay-field, as you intended, she would pass close by."

"Ah ! I thought as much," he continued, as his uncle made a hasty gesture of assent.

"Well then," added Frederick, "I wish you would walk with me to Joe Smith's ; we can take the short cut, and by the time we get there they will have gone through Hart-field."

Augustus readily consented, as he wished to be out of the way when Lucy should pass near his farm. Mr. Smith was not at home, and they extended their walk towards Winbarrow Down.

Augustus had seen Lucy's pony carriage take the road which led towards Rollston, and therefore he felt sure she must have descended the hill long ago on the other side, and there could be no danger of meeting.

As they were approaching the brow of the hill, Frederick remembered that he had forgotten to leave a note for young Smith he had brought in his pocket, and ran back to Hartfield, promising to follow his uncle and overtake him by the short cut.

Augustus had seldom walked here since he returned from America, for it recalled the past too vividly to his mind, and all he had lost—the Lucy who was now more lovely than ever. For though she was free, yet her manner plainly indicated that he could indulge no hope—that she would never consent to be his.

"It is very hard," he thought, as he now walked slowly up the old path which led

towards Winbarrow Down, "that she will not even allow me to be her friend—that she so completely avoids me. It is wrong, for surely I might, as a common acquaintance, be of some use, even if my society is so distasteful to her."

Lucy had been persuaded by her little girl to go into Mrs. Jodkins's, who was now living with her daughter in the cottage near the beech-grove, where her old nurse Nannie formerly lived.

Mrs. Jodkins was so pleased to see them, that she persuaded Lucy to let the children stay, and have their supper with her.

"Well, this really is a treat," said the formidable Jodkins, with one of her most unwonted and gracious smiles ; a sentiment that was fully shared by the children, who danced about and clapped their hands. "Who would ever have thought of your coming up here ? Yet sure Master Hubert looks as if he wanted

the air of the heights; he's awful pale and thin."

"And he's all eyes and forehead. How does he get on with the book larning?" she continued with an ominous shake of the head, as if anticipating evil. "He ought to go to school, that's what he ought, and be knocked about by times. And you, missus, look pale too, and I'm thinking that ere boy is a great trouble to you."

"He does not like my saying so, howsum-ever, I sees plainly," continued Mrs. Jodkins, who almost trembled at the look of sudden and passionate indignation that flitted across the boy's features. "Here, Miss Charlotte, is some of your favourite cream cheese; and Master Hubert, you used to like our cottage honey," she continued in a propitiatory tone, as a look of pain and contrition replaced the angry expression on the boy's face.

"Well, missus, I've had a powerful dull

time up here, nobody baint been ill, and nobody's wanted me the last six weeks; and Nelly has got so well, she can get about almost as well as ever," continued Jodkins in a dolorous voice; "so I hardly know what to do with myself."

"I'm afraid that my sister Mrs. Lennox will want your services soon," said Lucy; "she is quite confined to the sofa, and her poor girl Mary seems to get more delicate, so that she can be of little assistance."

"Ah, I always knew Miss Mary would be a troublesome child; she was so intelligible when she was quite young: so very intelligible," added Mrs. Jodkins, with an ominous shake of the head, "that nobody couldn't understand her, and it really was not creditable."

Lucy could not help laughing, although she was accustomed to Mrs. Jodkins's strange way of speaking; for she was particularly fond of

picking up long words, and then making a jumble of them.

“And these ere progenies always either die soon,” she added, “or get stupid like, as they grows up.”

“We must go now,” said Lucy, looking at her watch; “I had no idea it was so late, really; it will be actually dark before we get down to the carriage at Hartfield. Come, Charlotte, put on your bonnet, quick.”

“Never fear, there will be a moon, missus.”

The sun had set before they reached the ridge of the down, but a rosy hue still tinged the western sky, and was reflected in the distant sea.

Lucy paused for a moment to gaze on her once so dearly-loved view, and to smell the fresh healthy perfume of the breeze. Then taking her children's hands, she ran quickly down, for she could not allow herself to think of, or even to remember the past.

But there was something so exhilarating in the air, that she felt in better spirits than usual. The children enjoyed the run, too ; and as it was very steep, they could scarcely stop themselves before they arrived near a field which separated them from the road.

They had nearly reached the stile which led into this field, when Augustus suddenly appeared on the other side. He was absorbed in meditation, and did not at first see them. He had pursued his solitary walk, after Frederick left him, along the Down, and was now returning home to his own farm, near Rollston, on the other side.

Lucy endeavoured to stop when she saw him, as she wished to avoid a meeting ; but the children were so full of glee, and also impelled by the downward impetus, that they pulled her on, and she almost reached the stile before she succeeded in stopping.

She was quite out of breath, and her cheeks

glowed with exercise and confusion when Augustus looked up, and saw her; yet there was something so absurd in this sudden and compulsory meeting, that she could not help smiling.

Perhaps he saw that she looked less repelling than before; or perhaps there was something in this spot, where they used to meet so often, that made it harder for him to leave her.

Lucy's great anxiety was to reach the carriage, and to attain this object she must get over the stile.

It seemed impossible for Augustus not to assist her; so their hands met.

No words were spoken,—yet he walked on by her side through the field; for each had read in the other's eyes a look which decided their fate.

CHAPTER XIII.

DREAMS.

HUBERT cried bitterly when he heard that his mother was going to be married to Mr. Derwent; but Charlotte was delighted. She liked Frederick, for he flattered her vanity, and said amusing things about every body; and she knew he had long been anxious that his dear uncle should marry her mamma. Yet this wish had been a profound secret, and Charlotte was very proud of having been entrusted with it, and of having kept it so long without even her brother knowing anything about the matter.

Both the children had been very fond of their father ; but Hubert had a much stronger memory, and in his own odd way he thought a great deal more than Charlotte did, so his father's image was deeply imprinted on his mind.

Perhaps Hubert now loved his lost parent better than when he was alive ; for he had a strange sort of impression, when he could not sleep at night, that his father's spirit was fondly watching near him, and therefore he was less afraid of ghosts in the dark than he had been before ; but he did not tell this to any one till some years afterwards.

In his dreams also, his father lived again, and was as vividly present to Hubert's eyes as before he was left an orphan ; and this is well described by Mr. Sandes :

“ Dreams of night ! dreams of night ! ye whose solemn
forms arise,
From your hidden lurking places, visiting the
asleeper's eyes,

What unconscious invocation has the power to bid
you come
Trooping forth in silent legions from the world that
is your home ?
Are ye ever round about us, viewless spirits of the
air ?
Can your unknown ministration choose the objects
of its care ?

Gifted with a life we know not, recognise not, stoop
ye, then,
To attempt a closer contact with the shrinking souls
of men ?

Hold ye then unchecked communion, tenants of the
dreaming breast,
With the bright immortal spirit, while the mortal is
at rest ?

Friends to whom as weeping mourners we had
breathed a last adieu,
Whom the grave long since had hidden in its bosom
from our view,
Meet us, clasp our hands, address us in the tone
they used of old,
While we feel no fear or wonder at the portents we
behold.
We regard them not as visions supernatural or
strange—
No: the past was but a fable—there has been for
us no change,

They are still, as ever, with us—we alone were in the wrong,
When we thought we had been parted ; fools we were to doubt so long."

But as the boy Hubert never spoke of his father, Lucy saw with surprise his low spirits, and she endeavoured to arouse and comfort him. But he did not seem inclined to play, although he appeared pleased at her notice, and said he would rather remain at home, and learn his lessons, if she would let him do so, in papa's study.

The lessons had been rather neglected during the days which succeeded the walk on Wimbarrow Down, for Augustus had been there a good deal. Yet the intended marriage had not been announced for nearly a week afterwards.

Hubert happened unluckily to have a particular fancy to study at this time, and was rather annoyed at his mother being less in-

clined than usual to hear his lessons. He had learnt them so very perfect too, that it was he thought hard not to receive much praise when she at length listened to them.

But now Lucy was resolved to devote her whole attention to the children, and she complied with her boy's wish, and took him into Mr. Mandeville's study.

She had not visited the room since her decisive interview with Augustus, and it was with a feeling of awe and reverence that she opened the door.

It was a dark day, and the room appeared unusually gloomy ; for besides the black oak *escritoire*, most of the furniture as well as the wainscoating was of a sombre hue.

But Hubert did not seem to be depressed by the sight, for he sat down on one of the deep window seats with his books on his lap, and began to learn his lessons.

Lucy sat down on her late husband's chair,

and determined to read his Bible, for she was deeply sensible of the alteration in her feelings since she had last opened that book. In spite of her great happiness too, it was strange that she now felt more than usually sad; and as she looked round on the scene of her husband's last moments, everything seemed more mournful than it ever appeared before.

"What is the meaning of the word 'inconsistent?'" inquired Hubert, as he brought one of his books and pointed to the passage.

Lucy endeavoured to explain its meaning, but as she did so, the inconsistency of her own conduct—the recollection of how often she had said and thought she would never marry Augustus—made her blush. And she was the more confused at remarking an expression of satire on the boy's face, as if he were struck also by the same thought.

Then she asked herself whether she had really fulfilled her husband's wishes by considering suf-

ficiently—by ascertaining that Augustus was really cured of his passion for speculating—and would her father have fully approved of her decision?

These were momentous questions, which she had never fully weighed; for in becoming engaged to Augustus, she had acted from a sudden impulse quite contrary to her intentions. She now implored God to forgive her if she had erred, and to bless her union with the person of her choice. But she had some misgivings that her father would not have approved; and as she thought of his last words, his solemn injunctions and advice, she could not help feeling unhappy, and the tears started to her eyes.

Hubert had remained by her side, for he was looking at the Bible and some letters and papers near it, which he saw were in his father's handwriting: then he gazed on his mother as she leant on the Bible with her

head resting on her hand, and he thought she seemed so sad that he drew nearer still, and took her other small white hand that lay on her black dress, and pressed it in his own.

Hubert seldom evinced much fondness for any one, therefore Lucy was the more pleased at this unwonted indication of his love, and perhaps even sympathy, for she sometimes fancied he understood and saw much more than children generally notice ; yet whenever she questioned him, he did not seem inclined to give utterance to his thoughts, and she was often startled and perplexed at the look of sullen reserve he assumed on these occasions.

He now looked so sad and pale, that she again tried to persuade him to go out and play with his sister and Frederic in the garden. But he shook his head with a look of determination ; and then, after considering for a few moments, he said,

“ No, I will not go and play, for I don’t

like Frederic ; I never could, and now I dislike him more than ever."

"Why, what has he done to annoy you, my dear child ?" inquired Lucy with surprise.

"He does not love you, I know," exclaimed Hubert quickly, as if unable to resist a sudden impulse to utter thoughts which he had long been brooding over in silence. "I am sure he does not, though he looks as if he did when you see him ; and he is not even glad now that his uncle is so happy ; but he looks as he does when he has won a wager, or beat us in a game, and as he did one day when he crushed a toad under his foot on purpose, and then looked down on it and laughed, while the poor creature was wriggling about."

"Oh, in such pain as it must have been," continued Hubert, and he turned pale and seemed almost breathless at the recollection.

"Then he used to look like that too when you wouldn't speak to his uncle last summer,

when we met him out walking, and he used often to frown and look at you, oh ! with such eyes."

And the child tried to imitate him, and compressed his lips, and pouted with such a bad expression, that Lucy was quite startled ; for she never knew that her boy had such a turn for mimicry or capacity for imitation, and she could scarcely believe that Frederic could ever look so truly diabolical.

CHAPTER XIV.

PROCRASTINATION.

“WELL, I most heartily wish you joy,” said Mr. Flamborough to Augustus Derwent, a few days afterwards. “Mrs. Mandeville is the most beautiful creature I ever saw; I always admired her as Lucy Lennox; but she is still more lovely now than she formerly was. You are a lucky fellow, indeed; and do you know that all Mandeville’s fortune is in her power? If there be no marriage settlement, you will be able to do exactly as you like with it all.”

Augustus started, for he was too deeply attached to Lucy ever to have bestowed any

thought on her fortune, though he now remembered that his nephew had often talked to him about it. Yet he never then contemplated the possibility of its becoming his ; but now the words, " If there be no settlement," sounded with baneful fascination in his ears. Yet, ought there not to be a settlement then ? Was it just ? for Mr. Mandeville could never have contemplated at that time the possibility of her marrying him.

" You seem surprised," continued Mr. Flamborough, " but I assure you it is the case ; for Mr. Smith, who drew up the will, told me all about it."

" Well, good bye," he continued, as he took his leave ; " of course the first thing you will do, after your marriage, will be to buy Rollston Court."

If there be no settlement !

Often and often these words recurred to Augustus, and sometimes he resolved to see

Mr. Smith, and persuade Lucy to have the property settled on her late husband's children, and thus put it entirely out of his power. But he procrastinated from day to day. And then he was too happy, too wild with delight at the realization of all his long dreams of bliss, to prognosticate any evil. It would be impossible for him to speculate, when once he possessed the treasure of Lucy's love. Every duty would be now so easy that he could never do wrong again.

Lucy was quite ignorant of the important subjects of wills and settlements. She considered that Mr. Mandeville's fortune would, of course, go to his children when she died; though, for the present, she had the management of it, and had been told that she could do whatever she pleased.

So she never mentioned the subject to Augustus, and the day fixed for the wedding approached without any arrangement having

been made ; and, besides, all the days passed by now so happily with Lucy, that she seemed to have no time for business.

Harriet was still too delicate to travel, and her husband did not like to leave her ; but she had written letter after letter to urge the expediency of hastening the marriage.

Mr. Mandeville had been dead nearly two years and a half, so there seemed to be no reason for any further delay, and Augustus endeavoured to persuade Lucy that it would be very pleasant to have a little tour abroad while the fine autumn season lasted.

So at length she consented, and the first of September was fixed for the important ceremony.

As Augustus walked home to his farm on the evening before the marriage, his conscience smote him for having neglected to fulfil his intention about the settlement of Lucy's property. Then he tried to think that he had

forgotten it, and therefore was not so much to blame.

But the idea haunted him so painfully in the night, that it seemed to damp his joy, and for some hours he could not sleep.

In vain he tried to stifle the voice of conscience, by remarking that he and Lucy would be so completely one, that, of course, he would act exactly as she wished about everything. That he would make a will at once, and leave the fortune entirely to her. For it would become his absolutely, the instant they were married ; and if he were to die without a will, his nephew Frederick would succeed to almost all of it as heir-at-law.

"Poor Lucy did not know this," he reflected, with a bitter pang of self-reproach.

"I ought to have told her, certainly, for life is so uncertain, and Frederick, though much improved, could not be trusted. He would doubtless keep all the property if he were to

get possession of it, and then Lucy and her children would be actual beggars."

Augustus tossed about uneasily as these thoughts gained more and more hold upon his mind ; but he tried to remember that he might make the will as they passed through London, where they were to spend a few days on their road to Dover.

He would see his family solicitor the instant he arrived ; and surely there could be no fear of his dying during the short interval after the marriage ceremony.

There can be no danger, he asserted again and again, till at length he fell asleep.

But his dreams were full of horrors : he saw Frederic, as he looked at some moments when he was found fault with, seizing Lucy's hand and leading her away : then Frederick seemed to be transformed into his brother Lionel, and he was endeavouring to separate Lucy from him, and she looked so pale and worn, and

Lionel was drawing her on towards a precipice ! and Augustus could not stir a step to save her ; and then he heard a piercing shriek — Lucy calling to him to save her children, for Lionel was drowning them ; and the sea raged, and he saw Lionel cling to the spar, just as he had often thought his brother must have done in his last moments.

Lucy was endeavouring to take hold of it also to save her life, and Lionel pushed away her hands. Hubert and Charlotte were struggling also amid the waves ; and then the sea seemed suddenly to be transformed into a churchyard, and the crested foam of the billows assumed the forms of tomb-stones, and black coffins were strewed about ; and Augustus thought that some of them contained the bodies of Lucy and her children buried alive ; but he could not discern which they were, yet he had the painful impression that if he could but discover and open the lid, they might still be saved.

And his brother and the young Frederick were both looking on with triumphant countenances, and fiendish laughter sounded in his ears, while Augustus thought they knew, but would not tell him. And then black figures, who had been digging deep graves, came and took the coffins away, and Augustus could not stir to prevent them. And he saw three coffins laid in the dark, deep chasms, and the black earth covered over them.

With a shriek of agony he awoke, and it was a dream ; but the impression left was so fearful, that although a bright sun shone into his room, it was some time before he could even realize that this was his wedding-day—the day for which he had sighed for the last fifteen years.

“ Oh ! why could I not have done right ! ” he thought ; “ why could I not have acted as her father would have wished ! ” And he felt utterly unworthy of the prize he had obtained.

With feverish haste he dressed; he would not be at peace till he arrived in London and made his will.

This was the only alternative. He might indeed postpone the marriage and make a settlement, but what commotion there would be; how every one would wonder, and what a disappointment it would be, too.

No, that was impossible: he must hasten the ceremony as much as possible, and start immediately for London after church.

CHAPTER XV.

FIRST LOVE.

IN the meantime Lucy had passed a sleepless and anxious night; for the idea of leaving her children, from whom she had never yet been separated for a single day, depressed her more than she had thought possible.

Hubert had not been well for some days; and as he now slept by her side, his little pale, upturned face had an expression of suffering which was very touching.

A bright moonlight shone into the room,

for Lucy had opened the shutters when she found she could not sleep, having no light, and she felt anxious to look on the children as they slept on either side of her bed.

It had been arranged that they were to visit the Flamboroughs during her honeymoon, and old Jodkins was to accompany them.

Sir Frederick Renton was to proceed, immediately after the marriage, to a private tutor, who had undertaken to prepare him for College.

The young man had not made much progress in the culture of either head or heart during the years he had passed with his uncle.

He appeared, however, to have improved ; and Augustus sometimes flattered himself that his endeavour to educate his once most wild and unruly nephew had been successful.

But, in fact, Frederick's increased appa-

rent amiability was only caused by his having become a greater hypocrite.

Augustus did not perceive this, for he had too little self-knowledge, self-control, and self-culture, to enable him to see deeply into another's mind, and was, consequently, ill-calculated to guide or instruct.

The wedding was to be very quiet, for Lucy did not wish that it should be gay; and she had resolutely withstood Frederic's anxious wish that his uncle, Lord Spentmore, and his Aunt, Lady Laura Mildew, should be present.

Augustus wished that it should be exactly as she liked best, therefore, as the Lennoxes could not come, there was to be no one present at the ceremony except Mr. and Mrs. Flamborough, and two of their daughters, who were to act as bridesmaids.

Cecilia, the beauty of the family, had not been well for some time, so she could not

be present, and ill-natured people said that her illness was caused by disappointment at not being herself the bride.

Some time before the appointed hour, Augustus arrived in breathless haste, and told Lucy that the clergyman and the Flambo-rough family were ready in the church.

He said he had received letters which obliged him to proceed to London, without a moment's delay, therefore he had ordered the carriage to be ready at the church-door, that they might start immediately afterwards.

Lucy was perplexed and flurried at this unexpected haste; and she had felt so bewildered from want of sleep and anxiety about Hubert, that she scarcely knew what she was doing.

The impatience of Augustus would rather have retarded than hastened her proceedings, had not her maid and Mrs. Jodkins en-

tered most zealously into the bridegroom's wishes.

"It's far better that she should go off from the church," said that wise dame with a mournful shake of the head, "than come back here to dawdle all day, and cry over the childer again."

So the bridal toilette was soon terminated, and Dr. Short, who, in the absence of any near relation, was to give her away, led the trembling Lucy towards the old church of St. Andrew, where they were to be married.

They had not far to go, as it was only in the next street, so there were no carriages. They were followed by the children and some of the servants, and a few old retainers of the Renton family.

Lucy felt very desolate at that moment ; but as soon as she entered the church, and the solemn ceremony began, and Augustus was

kneeling beside her at the altar, she forgot everything else, and gave herself up to the blissful consciousness that she would henceforth now be his ; that it would be her duty to "love, honour, and obey" the being who had always possessed her best affections.

" All life lies in a bath of balm,
Feeling the lavish glory flow ;
With nought to do but thrill and glow
In strength, and joy, and luscious calm.

She no longer feared aught for herself or her children ; she must now always be happy ! Now everything in this world was tinged with radiant hues, and she might look forward with joyful hope to an eternity of happiness in the next.

There could be no more suffering nor sin, now she was his, "for richer, for poorer," in health and sickness ; no matter, poverty or illness, if he were present. Nothing henceforth could ever make her sad.

To love, honour, and obey the idol of her heart—the person she had loved almost from childhood ;—yet the whole great endeavour of her life had been to crush the feeling ! And now it was no longer a sin ; on the contrary, to indulge it, to cherish her affection, had become a virtue.

Could this be true ? was it not all a delusive dream ? yet the ring was upon her finger, and it was Augustus himself who had placed it there, and his eyes were beaming upon her with love and happiness as immense and everlasting as her own.

Such thoughts as these must always accompany the bride when united to the husband of her choice ; but it is very, very rare. It is probably on a presumption of this kind, that most novels end with marriage.

Yet, alas ! it is generally only the beginning of life, and most persons' fate is decided after, and not before, their marriage.

Qualities are drawn out in both husband and wife which were scarcely suspected to exist before ; and they become fearful passions or healing virtues, according to the efforts made to improve, or as habits of indulgence grow stronger.

Life is often a succession of errors : Lucy had perhaps already made a mistake in her first marriage : whether she committed another now or not, remains to be seen.

CHAPTER XVI.

TEMPTATION.

LUCY was, however, very happy at present, and enjoyed her tour beyond expression. She had never been abroad before, and in those days there were many inconveniences to be met with; yet every little rub or difficulty seemed only to increase her mirth. They only went as far as Switzerland; for, in spite of her enjoyment, she did not like the idea of leaving her children for a longer time.

So they returned to England towards the end of October.

Augustus enjoyed the tour quite as much as Lucy did, but he too wished to return, as he was anxious to make inquiry about Rollston Court. Lucy fully entered into his wishes to possess that interesting place again. She longed to live there, and to quit the gloomy old house at Ilminster, for she felt now that it had indeed become gloomy, and wondered how she had continued to exist there for so many years.

But she was not fated to leave it soon. Augustus discovered on inquiry, that the Rollston property was still in Chancery, and the lawyer he consulted gave very little prospect of the dispute being speedily terminated.

Then he heard that Derwent Park, which had belonged to his mother's family, and was the favourite abode of his childhood, was again in the market. It had been considerably improved by the present possessor, and the sum now demanded for it was a hundred and

twenty thousand pounds. Lucy's fortune was only eighty thousand pounds, and Augustus had succeeded in making five thousand pounds during his residence in America ; and then Derwent Park would not produce so much yearly rental in proportion as Rollston, for the park was much larger, and the place was an expensive one to live at and keep up.

"It would never do to think of it," said Lucy, with a wise shake of her head. But she went to see the place, and was so enchanted with it, that she could not help wishing to be rich enough to live there.

Railroads were in their infancy in those days, and the rage for speculating in them was beginning. Mr. Flamborough even, that steady and most unspeculating of men, had been bitten, and during the winter realized a large sum by buying and selling shares.

Augustus endeavoured to shut his ears and

eyes, and Lucy often repeated, with more and more regret, "We must not speculate."

At last Augustus said one day, "Yet if we only make as much as Mr. Flamborough or Mr. Smith has done, we could buy Derwent Park, and live there."

Lucy knew nothing of business, but she was accustomed to consider those gentlemen as the most unspeculative and sensible of mankind, and wondered whether it would be really dangerous for her husband to act as they had done.

Then, she thought, he certainly retained no wish to play or even to speculate, for he rarely ever mentioned the subject of those enticing rail-roads, and he certainly would never do anything she did not wish. Might she not therefore allow him to consult Mr. Henbery, as he had suggested, and try some of these magic shares?

At last Augustus one day spoke to her on

the subject ; and when she did not seem disinclined, he said he should like to follow Mr. Flamborough's example.

" But, dearest Lucy, you must remember it would be risking your children's fortune." And having said this, Augustus thought he had fully performed his duty, and imagined he was quite justified in giving way to the passion which was each day becoming more strong—to invest some money in shares.

" She consents—I do not do it without her wish," he often repeated to himself, as he endeavoured to stifle the small voice that whispered to his conscience. " But Lucy is as ignorant as a baby ; she does not know the risks she is perhaps incurring, and is it not my duty to guide and guard her and the children, and to secure to them the fortune that poor Mr. Mandeville left to her entirely, in the confiding generosity of his heart ? Still if, as I am sure to do, I increase their money,

I shall be benefitting them, much more than allowing it to be idle;" and by degrees the remonstrances of conscience, at first plain and audible, became more faint and indistinct every day.

" Oh, purity of soul, whose virgin robe
Clothed us, as little children, when we lay
Upon our mother's breast, too few, alas !
Cling to thee fast The heavy-scented winds
Of this fair earth blow all so sunny warm,
In the spring-burst of life, that ere we wist,
Little by little, fold from snowy fold
It falls and falls—and lo ! we stand, unrobed,
Cheek burning, and abash'd, as they who walk'd
Under the garden trees in Paradise."*

At last a trip to London was agreed upon, that Augustus might have the best information, and invest in the safest manner.

The children were to be taken, and they all passed a gay month there, seeing all those sights which London produces in the month of June.

* C. Hamilton Aïdé.

Lucy was delighted with the pictures and statuary that she saw ; and even the children enjoyed the change very much, though Hubert was, as Mrs. Jodkins said, “ an awfully grave child.”

Augustus, after much consideration, invested fifty thousand pounds in the Berryfield and Gallowstown Railway.

The shares were rising every day, and the director, Mr. Fallacy, had made an enormous fortune, and was building a splendid house in Park Lane.

A fortnight afterwards, the shares went down a little ; but it was thought they would soon rise higher than ever, and that Augustus would realize more than the expected sum. So he left London, and returned to Ilminster without much diminution of hope.

A few days afterwards, Mr. Flamborough called, with a paper in his hand, looking very pale and agitated, and begged to see Mr. Der-

went alone. Augustus led him into his study, the dark wainscoated room where Mr. Mandeville had died.

“My dear fellow,” said Mr. Flamborough, pushing his hair straight off his forehead, “we have made a sad mistake. I hear that villanous Fallacy has gone off with eighty thousand pounds, and the Berryfield and Gallowstown Railway has gone to the dogs.”

CHAPTER XVII.

THE OLD FAILING.

AUGUSTUS started off immediately to London to make inquiries, and see what could be saved of the fifty thousand pounds. Lucy longed to accompany him, but she could not well leave the children; and besides, if she were to go, the expense would be so much greater.

If that money were really lost, they would be deprived of more than half their income: they must only have half the number of servants; they must part with their carriage and horses; and poor Lucy thought over all the privations they must suffer.

Yet what more could she part with? the children could not do without their maid; and who could dress the dinner if the cook were to go?

And the garden? how could they live if the vegetables and fruit were not to be forthcoming?

"How sad to think now that we must always live in this old house," she thought, "and never, never have Derwent Park!"

* * * *

But there came a time, years afterwards, when Lucy's chief dread was the being obliged to leave that old mansion:—when they lived in constant expectation of an execution being put into the house—of all the furniture, the handsome cabinets, the pictures and carved chairs being seized!—And then she clung to it, and all it contained, with a tender love and admiration never felt in her former prosperous years.

* * * *

Yet, in spite of many vicissitudes and privations, Lucy had, during these years, enjoyed a great deal of happiness ; for she lived in her affections.

Most sufferings are bearable while the wife retains implicit confidence in the husband of her choice, and is as slow as Lucy was, in losing faith in his wisdom and goodness.

Her father had indeed excited her strongest and best affection ; and as long as she remained under his superior influence, she had courage to sacrifice her love for Augustus.

But now, since her marriage, since it had become her duty to cherish this love, it had become her ruling passion.

She was blind to the defects of her husband, and bore with un murmuring patience all the deprivations his imprudent speculations involved ; for, having once begun, he found it impossible to stop.

He was often absent for weeks, and his

letters were hurried and unsatisfactory, but she always received him with a beaming smile; only she became gradually very thin and pale, and her once joyous, bounding step had lost its elasticity.

"Pale she was as the bramble blooms,
That fill the long fields with their faint perfumes,
When the May-wind flits finely thro' sun-threaded
showers,
Breathing low to himself in his dim meadow-bowers;
And her cheek each year was paler and thinner,
And white as the pearl that hung at her ear,
As her sad heart sickened and pined within her,
And failed and fainted from year to year.

* * * *

'O the Saints,' they said, smiling bitter and grim,
'Know she's too fair and too good for him!'

* * * *

She looked like some pale spirit above,
Earth's dazzling passions for ever flung by,
Free'd from the stains of an earthly love,
And those splendid shackles of pride that press
On the heart, till it aches with the gorgeous stress,
Quitting the base Past remorsefully."

And Augustus loved her still indeed, but he

was no longer capable of a devoted affection such as her's. His thoughts were absorbed in pursuits which he felt she must condemn, and in exciting pleasures which palled in their indulgence.

Now, when he smiled on her, *she* might have said in the words of Owen Meredith :

* * * " Smile,

Not as your later wont has been to smile—
Quick, fierce, as tho' you scarce could hurry out
The wild thing fast enough ; for smiling's sake,
As if to show you could smile, tho' in fear
Of what might follow—but as first you smiled,
Years, years ago, when some slow, loving thought
Stole down your face, or settled on your lips,
As though a sunbeam halted on a rose,
And mix'd with fragrance, light."

They had been married eight years, and during that time Lucy had never seen her sister Harriet, or her niece Mary. She had been too poor to incur the expense of the long journey, and her sister's health had not allowed her to risk the fatigue.

Besides these impediments, Mr. Lennox had found greater difficulty every succeeding year to make his small income cover the expenses which his wife's illness, and consequent dependent condition, obliged him to incur.

For the last two years Harriet had nearly lost the use of her limbs, and was obliged to be lifted from her bed to the sofa. Mary attended upon her mother with unwearied patience, and bore, without a murmur, the irritability, and sometimes captious complaints of the invalid. But she was a joyless and somewhat dull child; at least she spoke little, and seemed to perform her duties more because they were duties, than from real affection for her mother.

Her education had been much neglected; for her mother was too ill, and her father too busy to instruct her; but she had read nearly all the books that the small library contained, and these consisted chiefly of theological works

by the divines of the two last centuries ; and in order to understand the quotations they made, she had taught herself Latin and Greek ; but she did not know French, nor any modern language ; for there were no books, except in English.

So the pale and delicate child had grown into a tall, and, as the neighbours said, an “ old-fashioned looking girl.”

Her father considered her pretty, but most people thought that her forehead was a great deal too large, and so was her head ; and although she had certainly fine eyes, yet they had such an odd look at times, that the poor people said they were ‘ awsome,’ and others were puzzled at their ever-varying yet unintelligible expression.

“ Dark violet eyes, whose glances, deep with April-hints
of sunny tears,

‘ Neath long soft lashes laid asleep, seem’d all too
thoughtful for her years.”

* * * *

Harriet still maintained, as she had done when her daughter was quite a child, that she resembled her own dear father. Latterly, as her health declined more and more,—and she felt that she must soon die,—she had looked with greater pleasure on the occasional expression in Mary's face that reminded her of him.

She began to think about her girl more than she had ever done before ; and endeavoured to penetrate what she now thought might be depth and strong feeling, although she hitherto half-fancied it was vacancy and insensibility.

“ I do not think I shall live to see another spring,” she said one day to her daughter, who had just finished reading to her a chapter in the New Testament.

Mary looked up in surprise and dread ; for this was the first time during all these years

of illness that her mother had alluded to her death.

"I have been very wrong and very discontented, dear child," she continued, "and have given you much more trouble than I ought, and you must often have thought I did not care for you; but I did not see or feel it at the time. I do now; for it seems as if God had opened my eyes at last, and I see things as they are—as my dear father used to make me see them."

"And I hope now that God will forgive me, and that you will, too," she continued, while the tears started to her eyes. "I see you do, for you look now like my father: and so you did, when you read a verse in that chapter, which he used often to repeat to me, Do read it again, something about 'a willing mind.'"

Mary glanced over the chapter, and then read the twelfth verse of the eighth chapter of

the second of Corinthians: "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."

"Yes," said Harriet; "and you read in the third verse, that St. Paul says of the Macedonians, 'To their power, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves.' Ah!" she continued with a sigh, "I had very little power, and my dear father must have seen that, although I was a strong, even-tempered girl, and every one thought me very good. You are very different, dear Mary; so different that I always felt I could never help you much. Your aunt could, I think; and I am going to write and ask her to let you go and live with her when I die."

"Oh! do not talk of dying, dear mamma," said Mary, bursting into tears: "And it is I who ought to ask your forgiveness for not having loved you half so much as I ought."

“ You could not help it, darling child ; you have done all you could, and it was even more kind to sacrifice your time, and sit here hour after hour, as you did not love me so very much. I see that now, and I am sure you will become just such a character as my father ; and you will be very happy with your aunt, and it will be easy for you to love her much better than you ever could me, because you are more like her. And she will want it too ; besides, you have never had any instruction, so your father quite agrees with me, that you ought to go and learn something with Lucy and Charlotte ; at all events, for a time. I can bear to think of it now, though I often used to feel jealous, and dreaded your loving your aunt better than me, as you did when you were quite a child.”

Mary blushed, for she felt conscious that her mother's words were true ; and then she said,

"I certainly did love aunt Lucy most painfully, but I could never leave dear papa ; no certainly not ; if—"

"If he were alone," she continued to herself.

And from henceforth Mary loved and admired her mother; for as Harriet lay on her sick bed, and communed with her God, she became quite an altered person.

The near prospect of death, borne with Christian resignation, imparts a sublimity to the character of those who used before to be considered common-place or foolish.

Harriet had long contemplated the approach of death, although she had for years tried to stifle the impression, and to hope for happiness and ease in this world. But now at last she was able to realize the prospect of a far greater happiness in the next ; and this tone of mind seemed also to have the effect of calling forth the hitherto dormant powers and energies of her daughter's character.

Mary's retentive memory enabled her to repeat passages from her favourite old divines, which gave still more hope to the dying woman ; and also made her daughter feel the full value of their writings.

Dark passages, which had often puzzled Harriet in Scripture, were now expounded to her by Mary, in the words of Kidder, Butler, Hooker, Leighton, &c.

As Mrs. Lennox listened with a placid smile, she gained more and more confidence that her daughter would be able to guide herself happily through the intricate paths of this sinful world.

When she became weaker, and could scarcely see or hear, the happy look still beamed on her countenance when Mary pressed her hand.

And so, without any last words or parting struggle, she gradually sank into insensibility, and her daughter one evening felt that the hand which had for days and nights clung to

her own, had gently relaxed its grasp, and the cold fingers no longer responded to her touch.

Mr. Lennox was not in the room at that moment, as he had passed the last three nights watching by her side, and he had gone to take an hour's sleep in his library chair.

So Mary was for the first time alone in the presence of death.

She did not cry, for she thought her mother looked happier than she had ever seen her before; but she kissed the cold forehead with a feeling of awe and reverence, and felt it would be wrong to indulge in selfish grief, for her mother had gone from a life of extreme suffering to a joyful immortality.

But when she left the room and proceeded to the study, a feeling of loneliness and desolation came over her, and she threw herself sobbing into her father's arms.

“ We tremble by the harmless bed
Of one loved and departed—
Our tears drop on the lips that said
Last night, ‘ Be stronger-hearted !’
Oh God—to clasp those fingers close,
And yet to feel so lonely !
To see a light upon such brows,
Which is the daylight only !
Be pitiful, oh God.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SISTER'S REQUEST.

"ARE there no letters to-day?" enquired Lucy in an anxious tone of her daughter Charlotte, as they sat down to breakfast one morning.

"Yes, dear mamma, there is one from cousin Mary, but I did not want you to see it till you had breakfasted," said Charlotte, whose usually rosy cheeks were pale, and her manner agitated.

"Oh, give it me, I must see it," said Lucy,

becoming aware, from Charlotte's manner, that something was wrong.

"I wish I had not told you there was a letter; but you said I ought never to deceive any one, even when it is to do good."

"You are quite right, my dear child," said Lucy, looking with an approving smile on her daughter's honest and pleasant, though not very pretty face.

Charlotte Mandeville was now a tall, blooming young lady of sixteen.

Shewas neither clever nor accomplished, but she had a certain winning gracefulness in all that she did and said, which sometimes resembled her mother, and is often more attractive to the generality of people than regular beauty, or decided talent.

She had strong health and an even temper, which had helped her to bear with cheerful good humour the vicissitudes and deprivations which her own family had often experienced.

Her mother's careful culture had eradicated that harshness and self-conceit which, as a child, rendered her disagreeable and overbearing; but she retained sufficient firmness and self-satisfaction to insure a certain degree of contentment, and render her independent of the praise which a deficiency in talent and beauty would prevent her from receiving.

She had also sufficient hardness and reliance on her own judgment to feel more comfortable when she had decided to the best of her abilities, which, in this world of struggle and perplexity, is sometimes more satisfactory than the misgivings and self-reproachings of more sensitive persons. This quality often makes people happier, even in their errors, than the attainment of a juster decision produces in the minds of more far-seeing and wiser persons.

Self-conceit seems an ugly quality, yet a

degree of it is requisite for some weak natures, or perhaps I should rather say, small minds, which would otherwise be completely crushed by the consciousness of inferiority, and it is often given by a wise Providence, that such persons may not feel in too great a degree their want of power and genius.

"Ah! I knew how it would be, dear, dear mamma," exclaimed Charlotte, as she threw her arms round her mother's neck, "and no one here to comfort you but me. How sad that papa should be away just at this moment; but, remember, Hubert is coming home to-morrow. Oh, don't cry so bitterly, don't."

"To think that I have never seen her since I married," said Mrs. Derwent, "and shall never, never see her again in this world! dear, dear Harriet!"

And the recollection of their happy childhood, and the memory of bygone years,

overpowered her with grief for some moments.

Charlotte, seeing that remonstrance was useless, allowed sorrow to have its course for a little while, and then gently tried to divert her mother's mind to other things.

"What a good hand cousin Mary writes, but it looks like an old sermon—one of grandpapa's that you let me read last Sunday—so upright."

"Exactly like it, and how steadily she has written," continued Charlotte: "she could not have been agitated at all, and yet she says her poor father is quite knocked down by the blow."

"The hand is very like my dear father's," said Lucy, "and he was never flurried. And I did not use to be; yet now I tremble and shake all over, at everything."

The next day a letter arrived from Mr. Lennox, enclosing one from his lost wife.

She had written it several months before, but it was not to be sent till after her death.

"I will indeed be a mother to poor Mary," exclaimed Lucy, in a voice broken with sobs, when she had read the touching expressions of Harriet's solicitude, and the passages in which she implored her to love and watch over her only child.

"Then is cousin Mary coming to live with us?" inquired Charlotte, with eagerness.

"Not at present, for your uncle says he can't persuade her to think of leaving him, but he hopes to bring her to us for a short time, if he can succeed in getting his church duties done; but that seems very doubtful."

Charlotte wished that her cousin should come, for when Hubert was at school, she often felt very dull and lonely.

She was a lively, sociable girl, and not very fond of reading ; and except the Miss Flamboroughs and their brother, she seldom saw any young people.

Sir Frederick Renton sometimes visited them ; but since he had got an office which his uncle had procured for him in London, he had become a very fine gentleman, and so conceited, he scarcely deigned to notice his former playmate.

Sir Frederick had been prevented from going to college by the embarrassed state of his uncle's affairs, so he could not study the law, as he had intended.

This had soured and disappointed him a great deal, but of late he seemed more reconciled to his fate ; for he was much sought after, and petted in London society, where his brilliant conversational powers and handsome person were highly appreciated.

He intended to marry the first heiress he met, when he could find one who would combine sufficient beauty and wealth to make her worthy of so brilliant a *parti* as himself.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ORPHAN.

MARY LENNOX most steadily refused to yield to her father's wishes that she should pay a visit to her aunt. She was very miserable and lonely after her mother's death, and longed to see aunt Lucy; but she could not bear to leave her father alone; and she knew besides that he could very ill afford to pay for her journey to the south. For her dear mother's illness had entailed more expenses upon him than he could meet. He had not yet paid the doctor's bill, and

the delay, she knew, preyed upon his mind, and increased his low spirits.

Besides, Mary shrank with a sort of vague dread from being again under the influence of her aunt's fascination, lest she should have to long in vain for that aunt's love and sympathy.

She had a vivid recollection of the suffering she had experienced when that fondly-adored aunt did not seem to love her, and she was certain she should now feel it more deeply still.

She certainly longed to leave Rufyn, because she had never been quite happy there, never in all her life, except during the few days when her aunt Lucy had seemed to love her.

Yet this had not occurred to her until the grief for her mother's death seemed to have awakened her slumbering faculties; and the deeper misery she now felt, made her long more ardently for happiness.

The fact was, her strong will and capacities had been suppressed by bad health, and the want of some person capable to direct and guide her. And as yet she had not energy to strive for that happiness which she sometimes felt she had the power to attain in herself, and in spite of outward circumstances.

But now, why could not she do something to assist her father? That would make her happy.

She felt within herself that she had the power to become anything,—to learn, or to teach, if she only knew what. She had often composed stories, and related them in twilight hours, to amuse her mother during her long illness.

Supposing she were to write one? She had now plenty of time, for she was no longer obliged to spend the greater part of the day in her mother's sick room.

Mary's first object after her mother's death, was to assist her father in the schools and in visiting the poor; but she had still much leisure, for she required so little sleep, that she rose early in the morning, and sat up late.

She had never read a novel, or any work of imagination except Shakspeare and the Arabian Nights; but she had heard of Scott's novels, and what large sums authors sometimes obtained for their works. So in her leisure moments she thought over a story; and one fine afternoon in early spring, when her father had walked to a farmer's house some miles off, too far for her to accompany him, she thought she would begin.

She had scrupulously finished all the duties of the day, assisted their one little maid to make their sitting-room cheerful and tidy, brought her father's slippers, arranged his easy chair by the fire, and placed the tea-things ready for his return. Then retiring to

her own little low table near the window, she sat down.

"Surely this is a beautiful story," she thought, and a feeling of gladness lighted up her large eyes as she began to write.

Page upon page was filled, the nimble pen ran on until it was so dark she could no longer see. But her head was still brimfull, almost bursting with the quantity of story to which her imagination had given birth.

She felt in the words of Richter, that—

"Now the most beautiful dawn that mortal can behold, had arisen upon her spirit—the dawn of a first composition. For the book that a person is beginning to create or design, contains within itself half a life, and God only knows what an expanse of futurity also. Hopes of improvement—ideas which are to ensure the development and enlightenment of the human race, swarm with a joyful vitality in the young author's brain, as he softly paces up

and down in the twilight, when it has become too dark to write.”*

She closed her blotting book, and looking up, was surprised to find that the brilliant evening had closed in gloom. Heavy thunder-clouds now filled the sky, and the distant reverberation among the hills portended a fearful storm.

She wondered her father had not returned. She waited and watched at the open window during nearly half-an-hour more ; for since her mother's death she had been very nervous and apprehensive, and she had clung with greater fondness to her father.

The sun had long set, and large drops of rain began to fall, while in the distant horizon the lightning gleamed fitfully.

The air blew chill on her face ; she shuddered, and in spite of the new joy and hope her story had awakened, she felt so sad and

* *Leben Fibels.*

depressed, that it almost made her superstitious, and the presentiment of coming evil seemed to choke her breath.

Now that she had begun to think that she might do something for her father, what if she should never see him again !

This feeling, in spite of her efforts to reason it away, gained more and more possession of her mind, as time passed and he did not return.

She knew that he had gone to visit a crippled old farmer at the other extremity of his parish, and sometimes when he went there, and remained late, he used to ride that farmer's horse home.

This horse was a most vicious animal, and once before, when he had ridden it he narrowly escaped being thrown, and she had implored him never to mount it again.

Her vivid imagination pictured the whole catastrophe, and her poor father brought home dead.

She could bear it no longer : she put on her bonnet, and, in spite of rain and storm, she set out to walk on the road towards the farm.

It soon became quite dark, and as she proceeded along a road overshadowed with high trees, a distant tramp as of many feet met her ear.

The dull sound smote on her heart : she felt as if she had lived all through this scene before ; —the shadowy winding road, the dark night, the approach of many footsteps, the vague horror, had surely passed before her long ago in some dreadful dream or vision.

For some moments she could not stir. But now the crowd approach—some of the people have lanterns—they wind round a turn in the road—nearer and nearer they come—they are carrying something on a door !

“ Oh ! it must be my father ! ”

She rushes on, although the crowd of vil-

lagers try to keep her back. The strong instinct of love had divined the truth !

There, lying gory and stiff, she saw her father's body ; the flickering light and lurid glare disclosed a deep wound on his forehead.

She seized his hand—it was quite cold. His eyes were closed for ever—the breath of life had fled.

* * * *

Oh ! this was much worse than her mother's death,—gone without a word, without knowing whether he was pleased with her, whether she had been a comfort to him ! And now, as she walked home with that sad procession, she remembered a thousand times when she had been as she thought unkind, when she must have plagued him with her sullen reserve, or apparent insensibility.

None can know the agony of losing a loved parent by sudden death but those who have experienced it ! One would have given worlds to have known what was going to happen, even if only the morning before—how differently one would have acted ! And Mary's father went out without her even wishing him good bye.

Of all the trials and bereavements which humanity is called upon to bear, perhaps such a one is the greatest, to sensitive and self-reproachful minds.

Mary *was* self-reproachful, for her standard was so high that she never could reach it.

She blamed herself for her reserve ; for her seeming coldness. She saw now that she might have added to his happiness if she had uttered her thoughts ; that she might have improved his sermons, and helped him to convince his hearers more than he did, if she had brought to bear the knowledge she had gained in those old volumes which he had never time

to read. He might have been quite a different person.

Then she thought how presumptuous she was for thinking all this ; and so she reasoned unreasonably, and went on tormenting herself.

She did not faint, or give much outward indication of the agony she felt.

Yet she comprehended in a moment the whole horror and desolation of her position ; but she walked home with steady steps by the side of the mangled remains, holding her father's cold hand in her own.

Then, when the body was laid on the bed in his room, and the old maid-servant, with streaming eyes, implored her to go to bed, she felt as if endued with superhuman strength and wakefulness—as if she could never sleep again.

She persuaded Molly to go to bed ; and bringing her writing table close to her father's bed,

she sat down and wrote to her aunt and Charlotte, and then she formed plans for the future.

Though she naturally shrank from giving any one trouble, yet it occurred to her that Mr. Derwent might, and ought, to come and attend her father's funeral.

Perhaps it would do him no harm also to enter the house of death—it might open his eyes and enable him to see the wickedness of his gambling and speculations. So she wrote to him also—a letter that might have been penned by a person of twice her age, so well worded was it. She enclosed the letter for her aunt to send; and in case he could not come, Mary wrote to ask the clergyman of the neighbouring village to assist her.

Mr. Derwent could not comply with her request, for he was at that moment particularly occupied in a scheme which promised to restore completely his ruined fortune; but he sent her fifty pounds to assist in paying the

funeral expenses, and he promised to come in a week or two and escort her to Ilminster, as he trusted she would henceforth make his residence there her home.

So Mary had no one to assist her at this trying moment but Mr. Herbert, the old clergyman of the next parish. He was a matter-of-fact sort of person, not very kind hearted, but scrupulously conscientious, and had a good head for business ; so that he gave Mary some excellent practical advice, for which she felt extremely grateful.

In spite of her grief and self-torture, she clung to this life, and longed more than ever for happiness ; and the idea that she must henceforth live with her aunt, gave her an involuntary feeling of hope.

" Perhaps now that aunt Lucy has suffered so much, I may be of some use : surely I ought to have learnt to console people, for I have felt and suffered already so deeply."

Mary was right, for that long night passed beside her father's dead body—the sudden transition from joyful life, from the happiness of a newly awakened power, to the lonely horrors of such a death, added to the long years of watching by her mother's sofa—had made her old in mind and experience, though so young in years, and developed her otherwise dormant powers in no ordinary degree.

She discovered that her father had insured his life for fifteen hundred pounds, so that after his debts and funeral expenses were paid, twelve hundred would still remain.

To her this seemed a very large sum, and in her utter ignorance, she thought that she could afford some pecuniary assistance to her aunt; and she determined that Mr. Derwent should never persuade her to invest it in any of his schemes.

A week after the funeral, she had made all her arrangements, and awaited the arrival of her uncle with considerable impatience.

She watched by the window the afternoon on which he said he would come. A room was prepared for his reception, for Mr. Herbert had promised to superintend the auction of the furniture, &c., after her departure.

She hardly expected, however, that Mr. Derwent would come, for she knew his vacillating purpose, and thought it likely some unforeseen scheme might engage his attention.

Mary was therefore more surprised than otherwise when, at the hour named, a tall and still handsome man walked up to the garden gate.

He was handsomer than any one she had ever seen.

As soon as Mr. Derwent saw her he greeted her with affectionate kindness, and she perceived in him an indefinable grace and charm of manner and smile that reminded her of aunt Lucy, and justified this beautiful aunt's love.

But when the first half hour had passed, and she had time to scrutinize him more closely, there was something she did not quite like in the unsteady look of his eye, which seemed to quail before her steadfast gaze.

The fact was, Augustus felt that she read him thoroughly; that she, with her high standard of right, with her unflinching purpose and constancy, could never compassionate or make allowances for his weakness.

Youth is often severe; for in the rectitude and hopeful purity of its intentions, it imagines all perfection possible.

Mary could pity suffering, but not crime, scarcely even the criminal; and it takes long years of self-knowledge, many humiliating disappointments in our own efforts to attain goodness, and many backslidings and grievous errors of our own, before we can fully compassionate the faults of others.

Augustus felt this severity in Mary; he ad-

mired her lofty character, yet he hardly liked her at first.

But yet she reminded him of Lucy in former times, when she was under her father's influence, and he determined to try and be a father to the poor orphan. She seemed to call forth his good feelings ; for the first time for some years, he felt as if suddenly awakened to see how low he had fallen.

The next day during their journey, as they sat side by side in the coach, he felt more and more ashamed ; a remorse seemed to be aroused within him that had slumbered for years ; why, he scarcely knew, for Mary seldom spoke.

But he would have agreed with the villagers who said that "her eyes were awesome."

And Mary, the more she looked at her companion, the more she pitied her aunt. She understood how bitter must be the agony experienced when those we love disappoint us,

and gradually fall lower and lower in our estimation, or else force us to bring down our high standard of rectitude and strength to the measure of their error and weakness. She longed to help. Could nothing touch his heart, or give him strength to resist temptation?

All this and much more passed through her mind during that long journey, while to Augustus she appeared to be absorbed in her own sorrows.

CHAPTER XX.

ANTICIPATIONS.

“COUSIN MARY is coming to-morrow!” said, or rather sang, Charlotte Mandeville, about three weeks after the events recorded in the last chapter, as she danced into the room repeating the words to the air of a popular waltz.

It was her father’s old study, and her brother Hubert was writing at a table in the recess of one of the deep windows.

“Cousin Mary is coming to-morrow!” she repeated, and whirled round and round the room,

while her graceful figure in its light muslin dress beamed like a ray of sunshine against the dark walls, and her gladsome voice seemed to fill its often mournful echoes with a bird-like melody.

Then, with a light pirouette and a profound curtsy, she stopped suddenly before her brother's table.

"Are you so glad, my poor Charlotte?" said he, looking up at her with a grave smile on his lips, while his dark eyes seemed to show that his thoughts were still engrossed by his Greek ode.

"Beg pardon for interrupting you," said Charlotte with a slight tinge of her old pettish manner. "Yes, I am glad Mary is coming, for since you have taken to study so dreadfully hard"

"Dreadfully?"

"Yes, dreadfully, because the doctor says it will be the death of you; and, besides, you

never help me now to cheer poor mamma ; and Dr. Short says her spirits ought to be kept up. He said, ' My dear young lady, your mamma is suffering from hysteria, and your brother has outgrown his strength, and so forth ; and if he does not take proper nourishment and so forth ;' and Charlotte mimicked so exactly the little doctor's stoop and hesitating manner, that Hubert could not help laughing.

" But, dear Charlotte, you know I must study ; for I am the only person who can do anything for you or my mother ; and I want to prepare for college, that is, if—if—I can ever go there."

And the thought of the bitter disappointment it would be if his father-in-law could not pay for his going to the University, depressed him so much, that he leant his head on his hand with a look of despair.

" Do not be cast down, it is no use to fret."

" Ah, you think me stupid, I know," she continued, seeing a look of contempt on his

proud lip: "you think I am unfeeling, and too stupid to see what may be coming, and that this present prosperity can't last,—that papa will soon lose it all again. Well, I am stupid, but I sometimes think it is very lucky, for I enjoy the present day, and help to make people cheerful."

"I am very glad you can, but I must think of the future."

"I know you must, but I wish you would not see so very far off, and through everything and everybody; you appear to me to see all round everything too—you look on every side," she continued, pointing with her little hand round the massive old inkstand, as if to illustrate her meaning.

And as her rosy fingers and dimpled round hand flitted with butterfly lightness over the books and papers, it formed a striking contrast to that of her brother. His was thin and pale, yet it had an expression of power and command,

and the rather massive thumb indicated a strong will ; but the blue prominent veins betrayed the care and feverish anxiety from which he too often suffered.

"You see," continued Charlotte, "you see where nobody else can,—the back and sides, and all round everything ; so you never agree with, or please anybody quite ; and so few people understand you at all."

"Frederick does."

"Ah, I sometimes wish he did not, for I am afraid he will lead you into trouble," said Charlotte.

"You are very hard upon Frederick now ; yet you used to like him so much better than I did, when we were children."

"Yes, you hated him then, and I can't think why you stand up for him now, when everybody condemns him—conceited puppy as he is."

"Perhaps that is the reason I take his part,

for people exaggerate, and never make any allowances ; they don't see that he is a genius."

"A genius !" repeated Hubert, while his eyes kindled with admiration. "Look at his verses in the —— Annual : look at—"

"Oh, they are all very beautiful, I dare say ; but I can't understand them, nor can mamma either ; and papa says—"

"It is the fate of genius to be misunderstood," interrupted Hubert, impatiently : "but still, I am not defending his moral qualities. There he is very, very wrong, and I am truly glad you do not like him, Charlotte ; how unhappy should I be if I thought you could ever love him."

"I wonder how Mary will like Frederick ; how strange that they should meet ; and he is coming to-morrow, too. And this is another of his amiable, unselfish qualities," continued Charlotte, with asperity : "he only comes when

we are rich ; he never comes to help or cheer us when we are poor."

"He is very wise there," said Hubert, smiling : "he would only add to the misery of it all. What would be the use of his coming when we have not enough to eat, and nobody but dear old Jodkins to do anything for us? So far he is right. Now, go, dear Charlotte, for though you make this old room look very bright and cheerful, I cannot afford any time to amuse myself."

And with a half sigh Hubert bent again over his studies, and began to write those small crabbed-looking Greek characters, which Charlotte muttered to herself were quite spoiling his hand-writing, as she half-danced, and half-glided out of the room.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE COUSINS.

THE following day Charlotte Mandeville was in a fever of excitement. She ran continually to and fro, and could not help interrupting her brother several times to show him the bouquets and other little attentions she was preparing for cousin Mary's room, and to ask when he thought their cousin and Mr. Derwent would arrive.

Lucy was also in a state of agitation : she had not seen Augustus for some time, not since

the comparative prosperity he said they were now certain always to enjoy.

It was almost dark when a fly drove up to the garden gate. They had all been watching at the north window of the drawing-room, which looked over the front garden into the street. When they saw the carriage stop, Lucy and her daughter ran into the hall, and down the steps, followed by Hubert, who was anxious to see cousin Mary, though his shyness kept him rather in the background.

Lucy rushed into her husband's arms, and forgot, for a moment, everything, in the bliss of meeting him, as she fondly hoped, to part no more. Then, as if half-ashamed of not having noticed her orphan niece first, she endeavoured to atone for it by the warmth of her welcome, and the tenderness of her caresses.

Mary was deeply moved: for in the pale evening twilight her aunt looked so wan

and thin, that she seemed but a faint shadow of the creature whose lovely image had been the dream of her youth.

At the time of Mary's arrival they were living in comparative comfort; but this had often been the case before.

At first Lucy was able to enjoy these temporary cessations from care and poverty, but in time they ceased to be cessations from care; on the contrary, she was more miserable, because constantly living in apprehension.

At first she made efforts to economize, but soon gave them up in despair; she found the money would go, whether she saved or not, and the more Augustus had, the faster he seemed to get rid of it; therefore she thought it better to have comfort and sufficiency while they could. Yet she was always absorbed in trouble and fears for the future, and less able than even when

in positive want, to turn her mind to her niece.

After the first greetings were past, Mary saw with the painful sickness of disappointed hope that her aunt seemed to regard her presence with almost indifference. She was too impatient, perhaps, to expect more the first evening, or even few days; but her desolate position made her long for sympathy, and her diffident opinion of herself increased her depression.

Besides, it was so different from what she expected. They were all living in such comfort, such luxurious grandeur it seemed to her, after the dull, ugly parsonage at Rufyn. What use could she ever be? Only a *gêne* and an encumbrance to them. All her efforts seemed paralysed; she could not even recommence her story without any motive to impel her to do so.

Some people are always placing their fate

upon a die, and tossing up for happiness. There is a mental speculation, a striving and *acting* for success, which keeps some persons in constant hot water. Such was Mary inclined to be—the anxiety she felt to attain her aunt's love, and the idea that if this object were gained, she should be perfectly happy, was her besetting sin.

This sort of mental speculation is the same quality, in women, that leads to gambling in men, and proceeds alike from a diseased body, or an ill-regulated mind. To fly from its own painful sensations, or the ennui, which is perhaps harder to bear than pain, the mind stakes its happiness upon success in undertakings.

This was exemplified in Hubert as well as Mary. He imagined that the attainment of learning would produce the happiness he longed for.

He staked more upon his own exertions than Mary did, who desired to control cir-

cumstances and the affection of another ; but she learned sooner to trust in prayer.

The knowledge that happiness cannot be found in anything this world affords, is sometimes the last bitter lesson learnt by man. Yet hardly bitter, for it becomes beyond idea sweet if it lead him to seek for happiness in the love of the Supreme—in conformity with that perfect Will that first called him into being.

Mary admired Charlotte, and wondered at the change these years had made. Still, her cousin's gay spirits and unthinking mirth depressed the poor orphan, because she felt utterly unable to sympathise with them now.

Hubert she scarcely saw ; her thoughts were absorbed in her aunt ; she longed to chase away that look of silent suffering from her pale face, and to bring back the joyous light that used formerly to dance in those violet eyes.

Sir Frederick Renton did not arrive that

evening. His uncle received a letter from him, in which he expressed his regret at being obliged to postpone his visit for a few days, on account of the illness of his aunt, Lady Laura Mildew.

It was rather a relief to Mary when she heard of this postponement. From all she had heard, she was sure it would be impossible to like Frederick; and she saw Charlotte clap her hands with joy at this intelligence.

"That is quite a relief," said the lively girl; and turning to Mary, she added: "Now, dear cousin, we shall have time to get quite acquainted with you before he comes."

But Charlotte did not find this so easy as she expected: in fact, she was rather disappointed in her cousin. She was awed by Mary's grave looks and earnest expression, which checked her liveliness and silenced her songs.

Hubert, on the contrary, was pleased with

Mary : her temperament seemed to suit him ; he felt that she looked at things from the same points of view, and he admired the indications of deep feeling and high resolve on her countenance.

Yet he was too shy to speak much, for he felt rather afraid of her also. And in consequence he retired still more within himself, and devoted more time than before to his beloved studies.

So Mary seldom saw him but at meals ; and he observed with regret the effect of her presence upon his sister's gaiety.

“ Beseligend wur ihre Nähe,
Und alle Herzen wurden weit ;
Doch eine Wurde, eine Höhe
Entfernte die Vertraulichkeit.”

CHAPTER XXII.

ADMIRATION.

“WELL, how do you like Mary?” said Charlotte, a few days after her cousin’s arrival, as she ran into her brother’s study, no longer able to resist the desire of talking her over with him. “For my part, I wish she were a little more cheerful and amusable. Do you know she has never said that she admired her room, nor noticed the vases of flowers I took such pains to arrange. And all I say or do I can’t make her laugh.”

“You forget she has lost both her parents

within the last six months," said Hubert, "and her father in such a dreadful way too. It would be unnatural for her to be gay or lively."

"That is true yet, still I can't fancy her anything but what she is; I fear she will always be the same; she is so very steady and sedate: so old too, older than you, and I have always thought you might be a hundred," said Charlotte, despondingly. "I am sure you sometimes look it when you are poring over that Greek; and do you know Mary understands Greek? I found her actually reading it this morning in her bedroom, and she said it was only the New Testament, and that she read it every day."

"Does she indeed?"

"Yes, and then she said she knew nothing of French, and not a note of music; and she asked me to teach her," said Charlotte, with a slight air of conscious superiority.

"I am afraid you do not know enough of either for that, dear Charlotte. You never play, except a waltz or so, and you can scarcely understand Voltaire."

"Well, you know, Hubert, I never could bear learning, those French verbs and things are so hopeless; and as to Madame de Sevigné's Letters that you gave me to read once, they might be all very interesting to the people to whom she wrote; but I much prefer a chat with Selina Flamborough or old Miss Podgkins, who tells me all the Ilminster news. And Voltaire was an infidel, so I need not take the trouble to make him out."

"Oh, and I want so to know how you think Frederick will like Mary," said Charlotte, after she had solaced herself with a few turns of waltz round the room: "you know he comes to-day. I am sure he will despise her, for he, hates blue-stockings ladies, and says that one

comfort is, I am no blue, like his aunt, Lady Laura Mildew."

Hubert did not utter his thoughts, but he fancied Frederick would like Mary.

"What is that sound?" said Charlotte the next moment: "What is that? surely it is his voice."

"Yes," she continued, "it is Frederick certainly: come so early! and there, papa and mamma are out. Somebody should receive him. Do go, dear Hubert," she added, hastily smoothing her hair and arranging her dress, for she was afraid of Frederick, though she disliked him. "Do you not hear his voice in the room underneath? He must be talking to Mary. Now, do come with me, Hubert."

"No; I can't leave this yet; don't be foolish, Charlotte; go to him now—you really ought; I must finish this exercise before dinner."

Hubert had given Mary that morning some

of Frederick's poetry to read, and it so happened that she had the fashionable Annual in which it was published, near her on the table, when the young Baronet entered the room.

She had been much struck by some of the passages which Hubert pointed out.

"Beautiful words," she thought as she read the lines, "and beautiful ideas too! and yet—yet—"

What this "*yet*" was, she could not exactly define; but there was something in their spirit or tone that depressed her, and seemed not to be in harmony with her standard of good.

Yet she fully understood his meaning, and could enter into even the somewhat mystical and German style of the ideas, although she had never read any of the German philosophical works.

And her attention was rivetted by the lines, when she heard footsteps approach, and beheld a young stranger enter who she knew, from

the description she had heard, must be Sir Frederick Renton.

Her admiration for beauty was gratified by his external appearance. Indeed he was one of the handsomest young men of the day. His features were faultlessly regular ; and she looked at him without embarrassment, as she might have done at a beautiful picture.

Frederick, for it was he, fancied that she scanned his countenance with such penetrating and enquiring eyes, that for the first time in his life he felt abashed. His eyelids drooped their long lashes, as if he fain would veil his inmost thoughts from that steadfast gaze.

Mary had been so struck by his appearance, that she forgot herself ; and it was only when he spoke, and said with a smile, " I suppose I have the pleasure of speaking to Miss Lennox," that the charm seemed to be broken. For the smile only played round his lips, it did not light up his eyes.

Then she remembered that she ought to do or say something. So she bowed with a graceful and somewhat sedate air; but her cheeks retained their usually pale hue, and her eyes their calm, earnest look, for she did not feel ashamed of the admiration which had caused her apparent absence of mind.

"I see you have been reading my unworthy productions, and I fancy you understand them," he added, after a pause.

Frederick's experienced eye saw at once that she was no common character. That slender figure, those graceful movements, the stately turn of the head, the unflinching gaze, the firmly set, yet beautifully moulded lips, combined to form a being who might certainly become the fashion in the fastidious London world.

Her broad forehead, impressive in its serene repose; the large dark eyes like those of the poet, Mrs. N——, glowing with the quenchless light of genius; the sallow but clear com-

plexion : the black hair plaited in massive braids, growing in a rare and most harmonious contour round the forehead, and dressed with a natural grace that no coiffeur could imitate.

“ Thus she who came unknown
Into the stranger-crowd with modest step,
And eyes that rather would be ruled than rule,
Having no need of praise, nor hope of fame,
Nor conscious of dominion, did subdue
Its chaos to her nature, being divine ;
* * * Herself informed
The jarring elements, till, as her sway
No outer sign enforced, no shows of power
Nor but a golden sweet necessity
Sovereign unseen, the subject heart gave like
Confession. Not as men confess a queen
With sudden shout, but as two friends regard
A rising star, and speak not of it while
It fills their gaze.”

“ Yes,” thought Frederick, “ such a being is worth pleasing,—she is worth captivating.”

He wished to extract her opinion of his poems. He longed to say, “ Do you like

them?" But the question died on his lips, for there was something in her ambiguous smile that made him feel her answer would not be the ready, admiring affirmative which had hitherto invariably followed that question.

She saw that she ought to explain the impression his poems had left on her mind; but this was not easy, although she endeavoured to do so without reserve or disguise.

"You admire, but you do not quite like them," said Sir Frederick, with a slight degree of contempt in his tone; and then, as Mary tried to explain, she herself began more clearly to understand what it was she objected to.

"I do not see the purport—I do not see the truth or principle you wish to impress upon your readers," said Mary, "unless it be to inspire a craving for that happiness which is only to be gained by self-indulgence."

"And what is not self-indulgence?" enquired Sir Frederick, "what are all the virtues but the

giving scope to amiable inclinations? A benefit, unless it be conferred from the heart, gives no pleasure to the giver or the recipient. You attended on your mother, I heard, for many years with the most devoted solicitude, yet if you had not done so from love, she could not have enjoyed your services."

"That is very true," said Mary, with a feeling of remorse, which the sophistry of her companion served to increase.

"And what is real religion but self-indulgence?" he continued. "Your Testament says, 'God loveth a cheerful giver,' and that the services rendered from a cold feeling of duty are nothing worth.'"

"No, but we must learn to love our duties," said Mary; "mere self-indulgence, as such, is debasing; self-sacrifice is ennobling, and leads in the end to the true abiding happiness which self-indulgence can never attain. Our inclinations are naturally defiled, and lead us astray. There-

fore we must take up the cross. If all were enjoyment, if our duty were always our pleasure, there would be no need of suffering, no need of an atonement."

"Ah, you have introduced yourselves to each other," said Charlotte, as she entered the room.

"No, we are above that," he said, taking Charlotte's hand with a look of cold indifference; "we have already plunged into a disquisition on poetry and metaphysics, and now you are come in to remind us of this earth; and to make our poetry reality," he continued with a bow of mock homage to Charlotte.

That evening, after dinner, Frederick asked Charlotte to sing. She would willingly have avoided doing so, but her mother had taught her never to refuse when asked, and she slowly walked to the piano.

Although it was delightful to hear her war-

bling about the house, yet whenever she sat down to sing a regular song, Charlotte's faculties seemed to leave her, particularly when anybody was listening, of whom she was afraid.

She was sure to play wrong notes in the accompaniment, to neglect the pianos and fortes, and to hurry through her task without giving the melody any expression or feeling.

Frederick stood behind her, apparently enjoying, as Mary thought, the poor girl's embarrassment; and when she had concluded he came up to her cousin and asked her to sing. Mary had never tried, she knew not a note of music, and she had had no spirit to attempt it yet: so she said that she could not.

"Do try," he said in an insinuating voice.

"Do sing, to please me."

Mary looked up at him with surprise, and a peculiar expression in her eyes which seemed

to say, "What motive can you have for this?"

He was rather amused, for he saw what she was thinking of, but persisted still more earnestly in entreating her to sing, although without success.

As the evening passed on Mary saw the habitual contempt with which Frederick treated Charlotte, and heard him often repeat her rather common-place remarks in a mocking tone.

The young man soon saw, however, by the indignant flash of Mary's eyes, that, far from being flattered at the predilection he showed for herself, and the deference with which he listened to her when she spoke, she only resented his treatment of her cousin, and despised him for it.

Therefore he changed his manner to Charlotte in such a way as to make Mary think he had hitherto been only teasing her out of fun ;

for his ready tact and long practice in the art of pleasing made him expert in regulating all he said and did, so as to please those whom he wished to fascinate.

He had secretly determined that Mary should love him, should be his devoted slave, —not because as yet he loved her, but because he wished to make use of her in some way, —to draw out her talents for his own advantage.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE ORDEAL.

FREDERICK paid a longer visit than usual at Ilminster, and devoted all his varied powers to fascinate Mary. But he saw that he made little or no progress. Perhaps because her goodness and purity were so real that unconsciously she was not taken in by the counterfeit he offered her, perfect though it was of its kind.

Still, though she did not trust him, she felt that he was very fascinating—she saw that if she

were to allow vanity to blind her eyes or warp her judgment for a moment, she should be lost.

He complained for several days of not being well, and one morning said he would take a long walk, perhaps as far as Derwent Park, to see what it would do for him. He did not return to dinner.

All the party wondered what had become of him. Mary became aware that she was eagerly listening for his step in the hall, that she regretted some sharp things she had said to him the night before. Bed-time came, and he had not returned.

"Perhaps he has remained to dine and sleep at Derwent Park; he knows the people who are living there now," suggested Hubert.

Mary dreamed of him that night for the first time: he appeared much more attractive than he was in reality, and she thought she

was very happy. But she was very angry with herself when she awoke.

The next day passed without any intelligence of Sir Frederick, but the following morning Augustus received a letter from him. In it he said that he had met a friend at Derwent Park, and had been forced to accompany him to London on some business. That he regretted extremely not having been able to wish them all good-bye: the more particularly as he might not see them again for years. For he had been just promised a diplomatic office abroad, and should be obliged to start for Germany in a few days.

"How very fortunate!" thought Mary, yet she felt unusually sad. But she remembered, and the idea comforted her, that she would feel sorry when any one went away: that she had cried bitterly at leaving her own old servant Molly in the north.

Yes, and she was sure she did not care much for Sir Frederick—that she had not half the affection for him that she felt for her aunt.

“O the thoughts that rise unbidden
In the secret heart of Man ;
Thoughts no dearest Eye may scan,
False and true together hidden,
In this heart of Man ! ”

But the young Baronet did not go abroad, nor had he the smallest intention of doing so.

The entire plan was a *ruse* to excite Mary's feelings, and see what effect his sudden departure would have upon her. So he appeared at Ilminster unexpectedly the following week, saying that his tory friend had most unfortunately gone out of office, and that consequently he had lost the post which had been promised.

He renewed his efforts to captivate Mary, but was much annoyed to see that neither his

absence nor sudden reappearance called forth from her any demonstration of encouragement.

Mary's ordeal at this time was greater even than she knew herself. There were some moments when she could not help imagining that he really loved her, particularly as the others noticed it, and even Mr. Derwent cautioned her, saying that Frederick was too wild and *roué* to make a good husband.

Then she would ask herself, "Could it be possible that the affection she inspired might redeem him? that if she gave way to the admiration she felt for his genius, he might really become what he wished her to imagine he was?" And perhaps then his powerful mind and poetic talents might be directed into a good and useful channel?

This is a fatal snare, and one into which many women fall.

But as yet Mary was preserved : her just mind, the spirit she had acquired from her deep knowledge of the Scriptures, and constant prayer, saved her from this delusive attraction.

No. The man ought to guide—no woman should presume to reform her husband. It could only ruin her, without redeeming him.

Yet Frederick's eyes were sometimes strangely fascinating, and now often, when he looked at her, they were lighted up with a glorious smile, when she evinced any interest in what he said.

But the words recurred to her mind with their full meaning which her father used to repeat every morning in their family prayer, —“ Govern all our affections.”

The great importance of this petition seemed to strike her for the first time, and she now found herself saying it repeatedly.

Fortunately for her, Frederick's leave of

absence was drawing to a close—he was soon obliged to return to London ; and he left Ilminster vowing vengeance upon Mary for her coldness, and more determined than ever to make her love him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DAY DREAMS. {

A FEW days after Frederick's departure, Charlotte Mandeville received an invitation from their neighbours, the Burford Smiths, to join them in a little tour through the north of Italy.

She, of course, was enchanted, for they proposed to pass a few weeks at Venice; and as they were people of taste and cultivation, she was sure to gain both pleasure and improvement from her travels.

It was the beginning of September when

she left home, and Mary Lennox had been now nearly two months at Ilminster.

She had made some little progress in French, and even in German, at first with Charlotte's help, and then with the assistance of grammars and dictionaries. She had great delight in learning languages ; but she had not yet tried to sing or play.

" Oh, mamma," said Hubert one morning at breakfast, " I have had a letter from Cecil Flamborough. He is coming from the Highlands the day after to-morrow. I am sure you will like him so much, dear Mary," he said, turning to his cousin. " He is one of my greatest friends, so musical, so poetical, so good. He took a very high degree at Cambridge a few months ago, and has been since in Scotland for his health."

" Yes, he is a very interesting person," said Lucy. " His aunt, Cecilia Flamborough, was one of your poor mother's most intimate

friends, dear Mary ; so I hope you will unbend that stately reserve a little," she added, with a playful smile, "and not frighten him, as you did young Smith."

Mary laughed a silvery, winning laugh, that aunt Lucy only had, as yet, power to call forth ; and she said—

"I remember dear mamma often talking of Cecilia Flamborough, when I was a child, and afterwards her saying she was so very glad when she married Mr. St. Ives."

"Yes, I believe they have been very happy, but I have not seen her for a long while."

The next day Hubert went to a private tutor's about five miles off, who had undertaken to prepare him for College.

He was to remain there all the week, and only to come home for Sunday.

Mr. Derwent was also away from home, as he was now Director of the railroad that had

caused their present prosperity. So Mrs. Derwent was left alone with her niece.

Mary endeavoured to supply Charlotte's place as much as her different nature would allow ; she tried to be lively and cheerful, to look at things in an amusing point of view ; to " cultivate frivolity," as she called it, that she might prevent aunt Lucy from feeling depressed and lonely.

She was not, however, satisfied with assuming the external manifestation of joy ; she endeavoured to be really happy, by cultivating gratitude to God for his many mercies. " Rejoice evermore," she often repeated to herself, and she prayed for a

" Heart at leisure from itself
To soothe and sympathise."

Yet she felt that she could not live in a sort of hand-to-mouth way without affection. She suffered more from half-love than from

none, and rather longed to be hated, than looked upon with indifference.

And in her present loneliness, she never ceased to pray for guidance every moment ; she tried to learn the delight of pleasing God, living in Him above all human beings, feeling that really " vain is the help of man."

It is from want of this abiding conviction, that all our disappointments spring. Hubert and Mary had both large capacities for suffering, and they felt that they deserved sorrow, because they experienced such difficulty in preventing themselves from leaning for supreme happiness on those they loved ; they found it so hard to give their first love and thoughts to God.

One evening after dinner, Mary was reading aloud to her aunt one of Scott's most enchanting novels. It was the first tale she had read. Her thoughts were full of the subject, especially of the hero, Lord Evandale.

The drawing room door opened, she looked up, and almost started, for it appeared as if the cavalier her glowing imagination had pictured, stood before her.

There was the fair long hair, the small moustache, the tall and slender figure, enveloped in a black cloak, the intelligent blue eye.

He gracefully advanced, and taking Mrs. Derwent's hand, pressed it gaily to his lips. Mary smiled at her own romance, for she then remembered that it must be Mr. Cecil Flam-borough.

He had called the day before, but they were out ; and now he came, as he was wont formerly, to spend the evening with them.

He seemed struck, too, with the pale, dark-eyed girl, and drew her very pleasantly into his conversation with her aunt.

After tea, he sat down to the piano. He

was well acquainted with the science of music, and though his voice was not powerful, it had been highly cultivated, and he sung with taste and finish.

Mary was enchanted; she had never heard any music at all before, but the anthems at Ilminster Cathedral, and Charlotte's songs.

Cecil was pleased at finding in her such a sympathetic listener, and when he discovered that she knew nothing of music, he offered to come and teach her both how to play and sing.

Cecil Flamborough was the eldest son of the gentleman whose example had first enticed Augustus to take shares in the Buryfields and Gallowstown Railway.

But, unlike Augustus, having suffered in the ruin of that railway, accelerated by Mr. Bubble Fallacy's knavery, he resolved to have nothing more to say to speculations of any kind, and he kept to his resolution.

But, in order to recover his losses, he curtailed his establishment, let his fine place, Arborville Hall, two miles from Ilminster, and came to live in a small house in the cathedral town, close to the Mandevilles.

Thus the young people were thrown much together, and lived in great intimacy.

By careful vigilance and management, Mr. Flamborough had some prospect of bringing round his estate into its former prosperous condition, and the family hoped to return to Arborville, and live there when their tenants term should expire.

Cecil was nearly ten years older than Mary. His lungs had been delicate, and the year he came of age, and two following winters, he had been obliged to pass in Italy, consequently his studies had been retarded, and he was almost twenty-seven when he finished his college education.

But the time taken away from Greek and

Latin, was employed in other pursuits,—not idly wasted.

His travels abroad had given him a taste for the fine arts ; he had cultivated music and foreign languages, and being naturally refined in taste, and polished in manner, he came home full of that agreeability which renders foreign society so pleasant.

Most of the young ladies in the county said he was effeminate, and the young fox-hunting 'squires said he was a ladies' man, and nick-named him "Flambeau," but he was considered a person of considerable promise in the county ; and probably, the young ladies turned up their noses at him, only because he did not appear to admire any of them particularly.

After this first interview, he came almost daily, to give Mary lessons in music. He was evidently pleased with the progress his pupil made, and with the talent she evinced ;

and one Saturday evening, when Hubert was at home, master and pupil astonished aunt Lucy and her son by singing a duet, in which Mary's deep rich voice admirably seconded Mr. Flamborough's tenor.

Cecil decidedly took great interest in her ; even more : at times, as he remembered her orphaned condition, he treated her with a kind of tenderness and affection that was peculiarly attractive.

Mary wondered whether he really was beginning to love her ; and then she tried to analyse her own feelings.

She certainly liked him very much, and admired him, but still she loved aunt Lucy better ; and she had heard that when people were in love, the one being engrossed their highest and best affections.

Hubert came home every Saturday evening and remained until Monday, as had been arranged ; and by degrees, as he and Mary were

alone with his mother, he became rather less shy and afraid of his cousin.

He felt exceedingly grateful to her for the frequent smile that she managed to call forth on his mother's pale face; and he perceived the motive of her acquired gaiety.

"It is very, very kind of you," he said one day; and she felt as if his large eyes looked into her's for the first time. And then a new and delicious feeling of happiness came over her.

For they appeared so like his mother's eyes at that moment, only still more sympathetic and loving than even Lucy's had ever seemed in the happy dreams of her childhood.

Long afterwards, whenever Mary felt depressed or lonely, the thought of this look of Hubert's cheered and comforted her, although she had not seen it on his face since that particular day. Perhaps some natural

affinity of disposition enabled Hubert at times to understand Mary better than any one ; but his shyness usually prevented him from seeking her society, or engaging her in conversation.

Mary Lennex often wondered how it could be that Sir Frederick and Cecil seemed equally to admire her, as she knew that people in general did not consider her pretty.

The fact was, that the variety of half-suppressed or rather controlled expressions in her countenance rendered her beautiful in the eyes of those who could read them, but a blank leaf to those who could not.

At times Mary doubted whether Cecil really liked her, for her aunt did not seem to notice his attention, and she thought that Mrs. Derwent would do so, were it really a serious affair.

But at times he seemed full of affection, and then she felt how delightful it was to be loved by one so worthy, and the thought that she might add to his happiness was very attractive to her.

Every motive combined to make her fan her admiration for Cecil Flamborough into love, because the effort to resist loving Frederick had been very great, and she knew that she would be more safe from his designs if her mind was engrossed by another.

She knew too how Cecil was circumstanced : that his father had a good prospect of recovering most of his fortune.

If she were united to him, she might perhaps be able to afford a comfortable home to her beloved aunt Lucy, in case Mr. Derwent's speculations were to involve them again in distress ; and this possibility gave her sensations of the purest delight.

So she abandoned herself to the joy of the present moment, and her future life seemed opening before her in one long vista of glowing hues.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE RIVALS.

THE end of October came ; Charlotte Mandeville was expected home, and the day approached when she was to return.

Cecil Flamborough was invited to dine with them. She arrived early in the afternoon, full of spirits and enjoyment.

Mary found that her cousin was much improved ; she had studied singing, and French, and Italian ; her mind had been expanded by her foreign tour, and without losing any of

her natural simplicity and naïveté, she had gained much in manner and agreeability.

The two cousins came down into the drawing-room early, and began to try over some duetts before dinner.

“So Flambeau has been teaching you singing, dear Mary; I am so glad: and what a charming voice you have! quite a contralto,” said Charlotte jumping up from the piano and clapping her hands; then encircling her cousin’s waist, she laughingly whirled Mary round the room in a valse, and her golden curls streamed backward like rays, as they caught the evening sunshine.

“Oh! here he is,” she added, stopping suddenly opposite the window; and to Mary’s surprise her cousin’s rosy cheeks and lips became quite pale. She looked up to see what arrival had caused this unwonted agitation, and beheld Cecil Flamborough walking up the garden.

In another moment he was announced.

Poor Mary! It was not her hand which he first seized and retained in both his own with such a lingering pressure,—not her eyes that he sought so eagerly. But the next minute he turned to her with his usual affectionate frankness, and Mary smiled inwardly at her own fears.

“Ah! I must really love him, or I should not be so jealous,” she thought. “How dreadfully selfish it is of me to regret that he should be so glad to see Charlotte again. They were always quite like brother and sister, I have no doubt.”

But the whole of that evening Cecil seemed forget Mary's presence: all his thoughts were for Charlotte.

He listened to her singing with delighted approbation.

His eyes sparkled, and a more joyous smile

danced round his lips than Mary had ever before seen.

She sat in her own little corner behind aunt Lucy's chair, listening to the merry laughter of her cousin and Cecil, as they recalled old jokes, or related recent adventures, and a strange feeling of desolation came over her; her heart seemed to beat slower and slower, as if she were sinking down into a lonely grave, with no one to care for her or wish her back.

"Yes, he loves her." This thought at last forced itself unbidden into her mind—"and she loves him, and I have taught myself to love in vain, presumptuous fool that I was."

The long evening came to an end. Cecil bade them good night, and as he took Mary's hand, he said, in a careless, glad tone,

"Ah, my fair young pupil has never sung to-night: you must not be forgotten to-morrow, Miss Lennox!"

Mary bowed in her usual stately manner, and no one would have suspected that the serene calm of her pale face concealed the agonies of a wounded heart.

Aunt Lucy leant on Mary's arm as they went up the wide old staircase to bed, while Charlotte bounded on before; and as she tenderly kissed her niece's cheek, she said, with a playful smile,

"Dear Mary, Cecil would be desperately in love with you, if he were not still more desperately in love with Charlotte. It is lucky, dear child, that you evidently don't care for him. I wonder if Charlotte really does."

Mary smiled—a placid smile—and retired to her own room. She felt as if half stunned. She placed her candle on the table, and sat down by the window, her head leaning on her hand.

A silvery moonlight illumined the terraced garden, and cast the long shadows of the vases across the walks. The white steps gleamed and

glistened, the cypress trees seemed to stand out in dark, rich relief against the fairy-like foliage of the elms and beech. Beyond, the cathedral towers and a few quaint gables rose mystic and shadowy against the sky, and one "single, silent star," trembled like a diamond tear upon the bosom of night.

* * "Beauty is a joy for ever.
Its loveliness increases ; it will never
Pass into nothingness, but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and peace, and quiet breathings."

This exquisite and familiar beauty, upon which Mary had so often gazed, had not lost its magic now. For she was one of the "pure in heart," and could "see God" in his glorious works.

By degrees she tried to think, to unravel the tangled web of her own sad and bitter feelings. She tried to gather up the golden threads of her life which had been so sud-

denly broken, and to measure the length and breadth of her disappointment.

She thought how much easier it would have been to give *him* up to Charlotte, if Charlotte had resembled her ownself more ; if there had been any link of sympathy between them. But Mary felt there were depths within her, that Charlotte could never understand ; and she almost chafed to think that Cecil should prefer one who, with all her brightness and grace, had not certainly such a capacity for loving him as she had. He could not know Mary, or understand her in the least.

All her bright dreams had vanished too—she should not now be able to help aunt Lucy, to give her a home, as she had hoped. And then she smiled at her own folly, at her regretting that the same good should be done by another which she had intended herself.

“ Surely aunt Lucy’s daughter is the fittest person to offer her a home. Yes, and I *will*

be glad that he loves her ; I will help her, and sympathise with her, and pray for her happiness."

Soon a flood of tears came to her relief ; tears of regret that she should have been so selfish as to have felt pain at Charlotte being loved, rather than tears of sorrow for her own disappointment in losing Cecil. And then she was able to pray, and to understand the strange joy the ancient martyrs must have felt, when, forgetting their own bodily tortures, their minds became absorbed in adoration of the Supreme, and in contemplation of a bliss that is not of this world, indescribable and incomprehensible, but satisfying, everlasting, infinite.

Hour after hour was chimed by the old cathedral clock, and still Mary gazed with her sweet face upturned to the moon, and pure and holy thoughts came to comfort her ; and the remembrance of Hubert's smile, that

beamed on his face so long ago, appeared to shine upon her out of the star, and to say, that perhaps one being at least would understand and sympathise with her.

“ There is a music runs throughout the stars,—
A constant harmony, sublime and low,
That soothes the spirit. Such a night as this,
The grand old German, rising from his books,
Open'd his lattice, and let in a flood
Of heav'nly melody. All thoughts that live,
However shaped, through time are rain'd from
Heaven.”

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE YOUNG AUTHOR.

WHEN Hubert came home the following Saturday, he told his mother that his tutor was going to take a holiday, and he thought of going to London himself, in consequence, for a few days.

Sir Frederick Renton had often invited him to come to his lodgings in Jermyn Street, and Hubert wanted to get some books which were indispensable to his studies, and which he

could procure at a cheaper rate if he were to go to London himself.

Most mothers would have felt some anxiety at allowing a youth of eighteen to place himself, without any elder guide, among the temptations of the metropolis.

But Hubert had always appeared so steady, so devoid of frivolity, that it never occurred to Lucy there would be any danger.

Yet, when he said he wanted to go for books, Mary fancied she saw a slight embarrassment in his manner, and an expression on his open face that seemed to denote this was not the only motive.

Moreover, she was sure that beneath his calm exterior and apparent *insouciance*, she could discern the germ of deep passions in his character.

Still, Mary dreaded Hubert's visit to London for his own sake, as little as his mother did.

He had so much self-control and self-know-

ledge, he was so old, so far-seeing, as to the pleasures and vanities of life, so young and innocent as to its follies and vices, that she felt as if evil would pass near him and over him innoxious ; that it would have no power to influence, for it could awaken no sympathies in his heart.

He was both older and younger than his age. With all his gravity of manner, and his deep earnest eyes, his countenance had an expression of childlike innocence ; and she thought he must influence Sir Frederick Renton for good, rather than be acted upon by him for evil.

"The poet hath the child's sight in his breast,
And sees all *new*. What oftenest he has viewed,
He views with the first glory. Fair and good
Fall never on him ; at the fairest, best,
They stand before him holy, and undressed
In week-day false conventions, such as would
Drag other men down from the altitude
Of primal types, too early dispossessed."

There was so much natural truthfulness in

Hubert, that it caused him a pang not to be able to tell the real reason that made him long to go to London. But the fact was, he had written a poem, and wished to try and get it brought out in some magazine.

Frederick had read some passages in it, and he had pronounced it very good; had praised it even more, Hubert thought, than it deserved, and encouraged him to persevere in his intention. So Hubert went up to town full of hope, and in comparatively gay spirits.

The evening Hubert arrived in London, he accompanied Sir Frederick to the opera. It was the first time he had ever heard any better music than the Ilminster Cathedral choir afforded; and Frederick, who liked to see the workings of character, and perhaps felt more interest in Hubert than he did in any one else, watched the effect of the sounds and sights on his countenance.

He was rather disappointed at not seeing

any particular indication of the enthusiastic delight he had expected would be portrayed on the youth's handsome face.

The fact was, that although Hubert enjoyed the exquisite music of the *Semiramide*, which was performed by all the best singers of the day, yet he had too much real genius to be dazzled by theatrical display ; and the rouge on the faces of the actors, and the glare of light, the smell of gas, and the fictitious appearance of the whole thing, gave him a feeling of disappointment and dissatisfaction.

There was a beautiful ballet, and that most graceful of dancers, *Mercandotte*, performed the part of "*Nina pazza per l'Amore*."

Some of the *figurantes* were very handsome too, and Sir Frederick took him behind the scenes to obtain a nearer view of the principal beauties ; but Hubert thought, that with all their clever postures, not one of them had the natural unstudied grace of his

sprightly sister Charlotte, or the stately ease of his queenly-looking cousin Mary's movements.

"He is insensible after all," thought the Baronet, who felt rather provoked at Hubert appearing so little impressed by scenes which to himself had always possessed a dangerous fascination.

"Who is that beautiful creature with the red roses in her hair—there—in the second box from the stage, just under the lustre?"

"Ah, that's a distant cousin of mine, the greatest beauty of the day, Lady Selina Hardcastle. I will take you to her box if you like," continued Sir Frederick after a pause, as he saw Hubert's gaze of eager admiration. "But you must beware, for she is very fascinating, yet much too ambitious to be satisfied with anything less than a Marquis."

"Unless," he added to himself, "that I

This opinion was confirmed, when, on opening the door of the box, Lady Selina received him with her most gracious smiles.

"I am so glad you are come, for I have been overwhelmed with savants and geologists, and they were so ugly that I began to think they were gradually becoming transformed into some of those dreadful antediluvian monsters they dig up and lecture about."

"Mrs. Sharpsetter, this is my cousin Sir Frederick Renton," continued Lady Selina, who saw that her chaperone looked annoyed at not being introduced.

"And whom have you brought? you know I don't like young men," added the beauty, as she glanced at Hubert and then turned towards the stage with a pettish shrug of her pretty shoulders.

"I hoped that a young poet, my cousin, Mr. Hubert Mandeville, would prove a pleasant contrast to the literati Mrs. Sharpsetter must

attract around you," said Frederick, with a somewhat contemptuous look at the hard-featured chaperone.

"A poet is he? well, I sometimes like poets, though I hate poetry; and 'Hubert Mandeville,' what a romantic name!" said Lady Selina, as she turned her large eyes towards the stranger with a glance which, though meant to be fascinating, seemed to imply, "and I am sure you will admire me."

Perhaps Hubert felt this; for there was a slight tinge of disappointment in his face, as he now looked at her.

Yet her features were faultless, her figure perfect. Why was he rather repelled than attracted by those splendid eyes?

Was it that the colour on her cheeks appeared fictitious, and the dark lines round her eyes suggested the dye that eastern beauties are said to use.

"I wish your worthy aunt, Lady Laura Mildew, would make her appearance," said

Lady Selina Hardcastle ; “ here I have been imprisoned all the evening with the blues and savants ; and I am dying to be at the ball. You are, of course, going to Lady Thomas-town’s ball, Sir Frederick ? ”

“ Yes, I suppose so.”

“ And you are going to take this young gentleman ? ”

“ I could not venture ; but if *you* like to take him in your train— ”

“ Yes ; he will do, I think,” said Lady Selina, after scanning Hubert from head to foot.

“ But now you must make yourself agreeable : what can you say to amuse me ? ” she inquired, as she gazed into Hubert’s eyes in a manner which often appalled her steadiest admirers.

“ I would rather listen to the music of this beautiful minuet,” said Hubert, with a smile, in which Lady Selina fancied she traced an expression of contempt.

“Ha! he is not shy. Where does he come from, and who is he?” she inquired in a low, eager tone of Sir Frederick.

Hubert was amused when he heard the words—“He is not shy;” for he fancied he was very shy, and knew that people generally considered him so.

But the fact is, he was never awkward, and had plenty of presence of mind and self-possession, although he had much of that shrinking reserve and dread of being misunderstood by those he loved best, which often produces shyness.

“Ah! here comes Mr. Mildew and your faded aunt; so let us go to the ball at once.”

“Now I will launch you into London society,” said Lady Selina, after they had arrived at the ball, and she had presented Hubert to Lady Thomastown, “for I have taken a great fancy to you; so you may dance the second waltz with me; and for this one I will give you the pretty little Miss Somers. Here, Lucretia;

here is a young poet, who is soon to become the fashion, and you are to fall in love with him."

Little Miss Somers blushed, for she was much frightened at the spoilt beauty, who often startled her, and made her feel very uncomfortable.

Hubert was now gradually becoming amused at Lady Selina's effrontery ; and then she condescended to tell him who the principal persons were in the ball-room ; her remarks, though sometimes cutting and contemptuous, were clever ; and she had a decided turn for the ridiculous, with which Hubert could not help sympathising.

" This is a mixed party. Lady Thomastown has written a book, so she is rather blue, and all those strange people in that corner are authors from all countries, and people who have invented all sorts of things ; but if you are going to publish, I will introduce you to some who will be very useful. There is Mr. Withers ; he is editor of the * * * * ; and if he takes a fancy

to you, he will praise your writings ; but woe betide the author who offends him.

“Ha ! you are getting up a look of defiance,” continued Lady Selina with a smile ; “you think it beneath your genius to be dependant on reviews. Alas ! poor boy, you have yet much to learn. Your cousin, or brother-in-law, or whatever he is, Sir Frederick Renton, is not above ingratiating himself with the critics : see his compulsory civil looks, and how he endeavours to appear as if he were listening ; and that his whole fate depends upon the sharp words Mr. Withers utters. And there is the witty Mr. Hazelford, who makes speeches in the House of Commons. But I hate that man, and wonder even why he amuses me, for his wit is so business-like : there is no spontaneity in anything he says. His sharp sayings come out with a sort of clock-like regularity, and he dissects the characters of his friends with anatomical precision.

“I had much rather a person should be

naturally dull, than studiously amusing," continued Lady Selina. "Now you may judge for yourself, as Sir Frederick is going to introduce you to him ; so good-bye till the second waltz."

Hubert found that Lady Selina's description of the formidable orator was very just ; and as he listened to the conversation carried on between him and Frederick, he remarked, that there was so little life in Mr. Hazelford's face, or consciousness in his eyes, that it almost seemed to Hubert as if he beheld some wonderful piece of machinery, wound up for the occasion to produce bon-mots.

While they were talking, Mr. Sparkleton joined them, of whose wit Hubert had often heard, and then the conversation took a more bitter turn, as the rival wits seemed to vie with each other in the ill-nature of their remarks and the keenness of their satire.

Many brilliant things were said ; and Hubert felt that his judgment and good taste would become dazzled, and his better feelings

perverted, if he were often subjected to the deteriorating influence of such men.

The flashes and cross-fires of their satire, for some time seemed to glimmer before him; and although like rockets they had dazzled his imagination at the moment of their appearance, yet they afterwards left the sky of his mind darker than before.

It was late, or rather early, when Hubert and his cousin quitted the ball, and the morning sunshine glared in Hubert's eyes, and seemed to him for the first time unwelcome. He had danced three times with Lady Selina, and Frederick complimented him, as they walked home, on his success.

Yet Hubert felt displeased with himself and the whole world, although he scarcely knew why, for he had liked Lady Selina better on further acquaintance, and there was something in her honesty and brusquerie that he felt was very fascinating.

"Surely that was Mr. Derwent," inquired

he anxiously of his cousin, as they passed a haggard face that looked away quickly, as if unwilling to be seen ; “and why will he not look at us ?”

Sir Frederick smiled ; and there was something in the expression of that smile that made Hubert’s heart sink. He scarcely liked to admit it to himself, but the suspicion flashed across his mind that his father-in-law had been gambling.

Hubert’s affection for his mother was one of those deep feelings that sometimes grow up unconsciously and unobserved in reserved and silent children, a love that is all the holier from the hidden sanctuary in which it is enshrined.

Hubert had never ventured to speak on the subjects in which he was most interested to her, nor had he perhaps thought that she would comprehend him, yet she had always been the principal object in his hopes and wishes.

To win her admiration and love, he longed for fame and success : for her comfort,—to

ensure her peace and happiness ; he felt that he could make any sacrifice.

And as he now thought of her pale face, and shuddered at the prospect of the misfortunes which were probably hanging over her head, a sickening sensation came over him, a mixture of contempt for himself and for his foolish admiration of Lady Selina Hardcastle, and for his gratification at her evident approval, and he felt quite a disgust at what Frederick had called his complete success.

How utterly contemptible it all appeared, as he now thought of his anxious and suffering mother !

END OF VOL. II.

